

Guidelines for waste service providers on the disposal of dead wildlife during a H5N1 Avian Influenza response

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Purpose of this guide

NOTE: These guidelines **do not apply** to the disposal of **commercial poultry waste** generated as part of control and eradication activities in a biosecurity emergency response.

These guidelines support waste service providers to manage the transport, receipt and disposal of waste that contains dead wildlife, contaminated personal protective equipment (PPE) and other animal by-products during a declared H5N1 avian influenza (H5 bird flu) response in Victoria. The guidelines apply to:

- local governments providing waste services
- businesses involved in waste collection, transport, storage, treatment and disposal
- landfill operators
- government waste management contract holders.

While H5 bird flu primarily affects birds, some mammal species are also susceptible to the disease. For simplicity, these guidelines will use the term 'wildlife' to describe both avian and mammal species.

The guidelines focus on the role of waste service providers responsible for safe handling, transport and disposal of waste containing **affected wildlife**. Decisions about whether wildlife should be removed will be made by land managers in consultation with emergency control agencies.

Where circumstances fall outside the scope of these guidelines, or where further clarification is required, waste service providers should seek advice from the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888.

H5 bird flu

The H5N1 strain of avian influenza (commonly called H5 bird flu) is a serious and highly contagious disease spreading globally, causing widescale death of poultry, wild birds and some other species of wildlife, such as seals and dolphins.

H5 bird flu differs from other avian influenza strains in that it can cause mass mortality in many wild birds. There is no effective treatment for H5 bird flu and the prognosis for birds and some mammals affected with the disease is poor.

H5 bird flu rarely spreads to humans, but this may occur if there is close contact with infected birds, droppings or heavily contaminated environments. The Department of Health publishes information on human health risks from H5 bird flu at [Department of Health - Avian-influenza-bird-flu](#).

As H5 bird flu is highly infectious and can be spread by the movement of birds, people and equipment, biosecurity practices are crucial to minimise further disease spread. Agriculture Victoria hosts the best source of information on H5 bird flu at [AgVic H5N1 avian influenza](#).

Preparing for H5 bird flu

Waste service providers should review organisational policies, *Environment Protection Act 2017* (EP Act) obligations, and occupational health and safety (OH&S) guidelines to ensure alignment with any requirements.

Advice from these guidelines should be incorporated into Emergency Response Plans or Incident Management Plans, where they are in place.

Stay up to date

During an emergency animal disease response like H5 bird flu, the situation is dynamic and therefore advice on where and to whom restrictions apply, may change. It is important that waste service providers keep up-to-date and are aware of changing restrictions and advice.

For latest advice on bird flu and quarantine restrictions

- Check the Agriculture Victoria site on [H5N1 avian influenza](#).
- Check the Agriculture Victoria live information about any [Emergency animal disease outbreaks](#), including infected areas, control areas or restricted area declarations.
- You can also check this information on [VicEmergency - emergency.vic.gov.au/respond](#).

For waste management advice and requirements

- Check the [Environment Protection Authority \(EPA\) website](#).

Operating waste services during a H5 bird flu response

With H5 bird flu having arrived in Australia, waste facilities should notify relevant staff within their organisation, check the Agriculture Victoria and EPA websites and understand if any restrictions apply.

Safely dispose of dead wildlife during a H5 bird flu response

The preferred approach for land managers and the public is to leave dead wildlife in place to decompose naturally unless public safety or amenity risks exist. Where it is not possible to leave dead wildlife to decompose naturally, land managers will need to safely dispose of dead wildlife.

Agriculture Victoria provides guidelines for land managers for **disposal arrangements when H5 bird flu is present in Victoria and there is expected to be an increase in wildlife mortalities**: [Guidelines for managing wildlife infected with H5 bird flu on public land](#).

Classify dead wildlife correctly

Dead wildlife infected with H5 bird flu is not subject to biosecurity arrangements. It is therefore **not** classified as reportable priority waste under the *Environment Protection Act 2017* (EP Act).

Under the waste classification framework in *Environment Protection Regulations 2021* waste code T340 only applies to 'Quarantine and Biosecurity Waste' associated with infected poultry or livestock. It does not apply to

wildlife because wildlife is not a biosecurity waste, as the disease cannot be eradicated in the wild, so can be managed as municipal waste or industrial waste.

Although not subject to biosecurity controls, wildlife infected with H5 bird flu still pose a risk to human health and other animals.

Dead wildlife and PPE may be collected through municipal services

Any deceased wildlife collected by a local council, or on behalf of a local council as part of their standard waste management processes, would be **Municipal Waste**. This waste must be taken to a lawful place but no permit under the EP Act is required to transport the waste. A lawful place includes a landfill permitted to take municipal waste. (Appendix 1: Licensed landfills).

For waste entering landfill via general waste (red lid bin), ensure double bagging and safe handling prior to disposal. Standard landfill controls for putrescible waste should be applied, such as promptly covering waste, managing leachate and landfill gas, and controlling odour, litter and vermin.

Dead wildlife and PPE may be collected from businesses and land managers

Any deceased wildlife collected by a different public land manager or a business would be **Industrial Waste**. This would include when a local council has contracted the clean-up of dead birds to another business (i.e. due to the volume and/or scale of the clean up being beyond the capacity of their standard waste management processes). This waste must be taken to a lawful place but no permit under the EP Act is required to transport the waste. A lawful place includes a landfill permitted to take putrescible industrial waste. (Appendix 1a: Municipal and Industrial Landfills).

EPA advice on duties and obligations to manage industrial waste under the *EP Act* and the *Environment Protection Regulations 2021* is available at [Understand your waste obligations and duties | epa.vic.gov.au](https://www.epa.vic.gov.au/understand-your-waste-obligations-and-duties).

Guidance relating to Waste Transfer Stations

Dead wildlife (affected by H5 bird flu) collected by, or on behalf of a local council as part of standard waste management activities is considered **Municipal Waste**.

The preferred pathway is direct disposal at landfills permissioned to accept putrescible waste. However, transfer stations permissioned to accept putrescible waste may also receive this waste.

Where a transfer station is authorised to receive municipal waste, dead wildlife collected through council waste management activities may be managed as municipal waste prior to transfer to a lawful place, such as a municipal landfill permissioned to accept putrescible waste.

Transfer stations that receive putrescible waste should consider the risk of encountering dead wildlife affected by H5 bird flu. Where appropriate and practicable facilities should put risk controls in place to protect workers and manage health risks. This may include the use of appropriate personal protective equipment when handling dead wildlife or contaminated waste.

Landfill operators should use appropriate risk controls

Landfill operators and those managing the dead wildlife should consider exposure pathways for staff (see useful links to such advice) and the pathways leading to offsite impacts. The main risks to consider include pathogen exposure, increased contaminant loading to leachate, increased leachate and landfill gas generation, bioaerosols, odour, vermin and contaminated equipment.

During an H5 bird flu response, there is a heightened need for good disease vector control at landfills.

For large volumes of dead wildlife, landfill operators should implement risk-based controls, including:

- Confirm the waste can be accepted under the correct authorisation, with Type 2 lined landfills preferred where possible.
- Place dead wildlife directly into an approved landfill cell — do not stockpile them outside the cell.
- Place dead wildlife away from cell edges, preferably in areas of the cell with greater waste depth present.
- Keep dead wildlife disposal separate from normal tipping operations where practicable and restrict access to essential workers only.

- Cover dead wildlife as soon as practicable with more than 0.3 m of soil, inspect daily, and only compact after cover is in place.
- Control vermin and scavenging, disinfect trucks/equipment, and avoid tipping during windy conditions.
- Record the burial location and date and avoid disturbing the disposal area for at least 6 months where possible.
- Review and update [risk monitoring and management programs](#) (RMMPs). This should address additional monitoring and management of leachate, landfill gas, groundwater, surface water and odour.
- Enact health and safety measures to protect onsite workers or visitors.

Ensure all personnel are trained regarding the hazard posed by H5 bird flu and their roles and responsibilities in implementing the controls.

The general environmental duty applies to H5 bird flu activities

In all cases of managing or handling waste disposal, the person in control of the waste must meet their obligations under the general environmental duty (GED), under the EP Act.

For disposal of dead wildlife, meeting the obligations of the GED should, at a minimum, include:

- Minimising the risk to human health from managing the waste, for example by using appropriate personal protective equipment such as gloves, a face mask and eye protection.
- Any businesses involved in the transport or disposal are made aware of the type of waste they are handling (i.e. potentially infected wildlife), the human health risks (infection) and environmental risks (e.g. odour) associated with that waste.

Further EPA advice is available on the [General environmental duty](#).

Keep waste service workers healthy and safe

H5 bird flu is a zoonotic disease, which means it can be transmitted from animals to humans. Avian influenza infection is rare in people; however, people who have close or prolonged contact with infected birds or animals or their contaminated environments are at greater risk of infection.

When collecting and disposing of dead wildlife, those undertaking the activity should protect themselves and minimise risk of spreading the disease to new environments.

Key information for protecting yourself is available from:

- Australian Centre for Disease Control: [National guidelines for avian influenza – protecting people who work with birds and wildlife](#)
- Agriculture Victoria: [Managing dead birds and wildlife on your land](#)
- Victorian Department of Health: [Avian influenza \(bird flu\)](#)

If you are unable follow these guidelines or wish to take extra precautionary steps, you should consider avoiding close contact with pets and poultry for 48 hours after handling dead wildlife which might have H5 bird flu.

Safe practices and good hygiene principles when wearing PPE

Guidance for using safe practices to protect yourself and stop the disease from spreading when collecting dead birds, as well as principles for good hygiene when wearing PPE can be found at [Managing dead birds and wildlife on your land](#).

Wear safety gear: a face mask (P2/N95 is best, but a surgical mask is acceptable if you don't have one), glasses or goggles, long sleeves, gloves (disposable or washable) and shoes you can clean.

The main benefit of long sleeves and long pants is to protect the hair and skin from contact with viruses that could later be transferred to the eyes, nose, or mouth. However, PPE may be adapted based on a site-specific risk assessment that considers work environment, activities and hazards. Of note, PPE selection should include gloves, and prioritise protection of the eyes, nose and mouth.

Used PPE should be placed in a single bag for disposal.

Hand hygiene is essential when handling dead birds or removing PPE

Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based hand rub before putting on PPE and after removing it. Remove gloves first and then perform hand hygiene before removing eye protection or a face mask. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth during PPE removal and perform hand hygiene again once all PPE has been removed. A face mask or respirator should be used together with good hand hygiene and other protective measures, particularly if a respirator has not been fit tested.

Clean and disinfect vehicles and equipment

Waste service providers are encouraged to clean vehicles and equipment to reduce the spread of disease.

Cleaning and disinfection should be targeted where equipment or vehicles have directly contacted dead wildlife, bodily fluids or visibly contaminated material. After removing organic matter, standard disinfectants (for example bleach, F10, Virkon, Viraclean or another virucidal disinfectants) can inactivate H5N1 when used according to the manufacturer's instructions and required contact time.

Wash any clothing that may have touched the animal too.

Further details about how to clean and disinfect equipment and clothing are available at:

- Agriculture Victoria's [Information for farm visitors webpage](#).

Report inappropriate disposal of dead wildlife

If there is concern that wildlife or other dead animals are being inappropriately disposed (e.g. incorrect waste stream) or if there is a suspected contamination or biosecurity risk, waste service providers should contact the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline 1800 675 888 for advice.

Report sick or dead wildlife

If waste facilities notice a sudden increase in the number of dead wildlife being disposed in incoming waste streams, or observe sick or dead wildlife around facilities, this should be reported to the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888.

Report clusters (5 or more) of sick or dead wild birds of any species, anywhere in Victoria.

Report even one sick or dead:

- wild seabird, waterbird, shorebird or bird of prey (e.g. eagles, hawks)
- marine mammal (e.g. seal, sea lion, dolphin).
- Further information on the signs of H5 bird flu and reporting sick or dead wild birds can be found at [Report sick or dead wild birds and wildlife - agriculture.vic.gov.au](#).

If Waste service providers have concerns about contamination or biosecurity risks, contact the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline for advice 1800 675 888.

Appendix 1a: Licensed landfills - Municipal and Industrial

List of landfills licensed to accept municipal and industrial waste, or municipal waste only*. This list is managed by EPA and subject to change.

(*Current at time of publication).

Landfill Owner	Address
Municipal and Industrial Landfills	
Bass Coast Shire Council	1685 Bass Hwy Glen Forbes VIC 3990
Greater Shepparton City Council	205 Quarry Rd Pine Lodge VIC 3631
Swan Hill Rural City Council	6859 Sea Lake-Swan Hill Rd Swan Hill VIC 3585
Wangaratta Rural City Council	5 Coleman Rd North Wangaratta VIC 3678
Corangamite Shire Council	Lot 1 County Boundary West Rd Cobrico VIC 3266
Moira Shire Council	56 Pye Rd Cobram East VIC 3644
Murrindindi Shire Council	124 Mt Pleasant Rd Alexandra VIC 3714
Veolia Environmental Services (Australia) Pty Ltd	Davis Rd Patho VIC 3564
Cleanaway Pty Ltd	492 - 494 Pomonal Rd Stawell VIC 3380
Gannawarra Shire Council	190 Denyer Rd Wandella VIC 3579
Mitchell Shire Council	470 Seymour-Tooborac Rd Hildene VIC 3660
Horsham Rural City Council	81 Ladlows Rd Kalkee VIC 3401
City Of Greater Geelong	502 - 510 Founds Rd Drysdale VIC 3222
Landfill Operations Pty Ltd	1100 – 1152 Christies Rd Ravenhall Victoria 3023
South Gippsland Shire Council	275 Koonwarra-Inverloch Rd Koonwarra VIC 3954
Veolia Recycling & Recovery Pty Ltd	890 Taylors Rd Dandenong South VIC 3175
Hi-quality Quarry Products Pty Ltd	570 Sunbury Rd Bulla VIC 3428
Veolia Recycling & Recovery Pty Ltd	274 - 310 Hallam Rd Hampton Park VIC 3976
Surf Coast Shire Council	50 Coalmine Rd Anglesea VIC 3230
Mildura Rural City Council	15 Scherger Drive Mildura 3500
Mornington Peninsula Shire Council	280 Truemans Rd Fingal VIC 3939
East Gippsland Shire Council	5 Thorpes Lane Lakes Entrance VIC 3909
Wellington Shire Council	95 Sellings Rd Maffra VIC 3860

Benalla Rural City Council	Lot 1/96 Old Farnley Rd Benalla VIC 3672
Hume City Council	515 Riddell Road Sunbury VIC 3429
Latrobe City Council	64 Hyland Hwy Loy Yang VIC 3844
Wyndham City Council	470 Wests Rd Werribee VIC 3030
Heidelberg Materials Australia Resource Recovery Pty Ltd	45 Bridge Inn Rd Wollert VIC 3750
Ballarat City Council	1380 Glenelg Hwy Smythesdale VIC 3351
East Gippsland Shire Council	200 Johnstons Rd Forge Creek VIC 3875
Wellington Shire Council	273 Velore Rd Fulham VIC 3851
Greater Bendigo City Council	191 - 193 Upper California Gully Rd Eaglehawk VIC 3556

Appendix 1b - Licensed landfills – Municipal only

Municipal landfills only	
Mildura Rural City Council	Ouyen VIC 3490
Buloke Shire Council	2006 Depot Road Donald VIC 3480
Loddon Shire Council	Tip Road Boort VIC 3537
Buloke Shire Council	2094 Birchip-corack Road Birchip VIC 3483
Mount Hotham Alpine Resort Management Board	Cobungra VIC 3741
Loddon Shire Council	40 Ballast Rd Pyramid Hill VIC 3575
Loddon Shire Council	Newbridge VIC 3551
Swan Hill Rural City Council	899 Robinvale-sea Lake Rd Bannerton VIC 3549
East Gippsland Shire Council	20 Coast Road Cann River VIC 3890
Greater Bendigo City Council	61 Golden Gully Road Heathcote VIC 3523