

H5 bird flu risk levels



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Current bird flu risk in New Zealand

Through surveillance and testing, we assess the current level of risk from bird flu. Areas are labelled as low, medium, or high risk, based on a number of criteria.

The current risk level for all New Zealand is low.

There is no evidence of any mass mortality in wildlife. There have been no detections in poultry.

It is not possible to predict when we might detect H5 bird flu spreading beyond individual wild birds in New Zealand.

Even if the virus isn't spreading here yet, we know it is likely to arrive again in the future, most likely with ocean-going or migratory wild birds. That's why we continue to ask New Zealanders to stay alert.

By continuing to prepare and maintaining good biosecurity habits, we can all help limit the impact of bird flu if it spreads here.

How risk levels are determined

MPI uses information about positive cases, such as where they are found and the species involved, alongside genomic sequencing carried out in our laboratory, to understand how the virus may be spreading.

Based on this information we identify three levels of bird flu risk:

Low risk

An area may be labelled low risk if there have been no recent bird flu detections in the area. It will remain low risk if H5 bird flu has been confirmed in individual wildlife but:

- Surveillance and testing indicate isolated introduction(s),
- and there is no evidence of local establishment or ongoing transmission.

Medium risk

An area may be labelled medium risk if there have been recent bird flu detections, and if evidence suggests there is limited local transmission occurring in wildlife. Evidence may include:

- two or more linked wildlife cases (by factors like location and species, or based on genome analysis)
- repeated detections in a similar location
- detection in species that do not leave New Zealand.

High risk

An area may be labelled high risk if there is ongoing transmission of bird flu in local populations. Evidence may include:

- multiple linked cases or clusters of cases (by factors like location and species, or based on genome analysis)
- an increasing number of detections
- spread across multiple locations, populations, or species.

A lowering of risk level will be dependent on not finding the virus or more cases over an approximately four-week period, which is equivalent to multiple life cycles for H5.

