



**Australian Government**

**Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

27 January 2006

Dear Editor

**Duck shooters have a significant role in recognising bird flu and reporting it!**

I am writing to seek your help in ensuring that Australian recreational (duck) shooters are aware of the avian influenza (bird flu) disease, its possible spread through Australian waterfowl and its effects on human health.

Avian influenza (AI) is a contagious viral infection of birds. The H5N1 strain of AI that has recently spread through Asia and Eastern Europe has been responsible for the death of about 80 people and poultry in their 100s of millions. If H5N1 AI occurred in Australia it may have major human health consequences and negatively impact on the chicken meat and egg industries worth around \$4 billion annually.

While there is a low risk of H5N1 spreading to Australia and circulating through the wild bird population, people who are in contact with birds must remain vigilant to signs of the disease. Unfortunately, waterfowl often show no clinical signs of the disease so it is important that groups that may have contact with wild birds such as duck shooters and bush walkers are aware of the necessary precautions to avoid contracting the virus. These include adopting thorough hygiene practices, cooking poultry and being alert to the fact that freezing their game will not kill the virus if it is present.

It is also vital to Australia's defences for this disease to have groups report anything unusual like a large number of bird deaths immediately to authorities. The prompt reporting of any animal disease will allow for effective containment and eradication.

You will find attached to this email an article and a fact sheet. It would be very much appreciated if you could print this information for your readers who are a vital key to Australia's animal disease defence.

If you require further information please contact Sharne Gibbons in the Department's Emergency Risk Management Unit by phoning (02) 6271 6570 or email [sharne.gibbons@daff.gov.au](mailto:sharne.gibbons@daff.gov.au).

Yours sincerely

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Australian Chief Veterinary Officer/Special Adviser

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