



The Hon. David Littleproud MP
Minister for Agriculture, Drought and
Emergency Management
Deputy Leader of the Nationals

MEDIA RELEASE

Friday 26th February 2021

Australia regains freedom from high pathogenicity avian influenza

- **On 26 February 2021 Australia regained freedom from high pathogenicity avian influenza**
- **The outbreaks in Victoria were successfully eradicated and ongoing surveillance shows no further evidence of this disease in Australian poultry.**

Following a significant response effort, Australia has regained freedom from high pathogenicity avian influenza.

Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management, David Littleproud said this was testament to the dedication of all of those involved in the Victorian response.

“Avian influenza is a serious disease of poultry and can cause high mortality in production birds,” Minister Littleproud said.

“We have a strong biosecurity system and measures in place to manage the risk of animal diseases entering Australia from other countries.

“We can rest assured that our biosecurity measures are effective—in this instance, it is believed a mild form of avian influenza that was circulating in wild birds had transferred to poultry and mutated.

“The recent detections in Victorian poultry were all successfully eradicated.

“Three months have elapsed since disinfection processes were completed and ongoing surveillance and tracing has not detected any further spread of avian influenza.

“As a result, Australia has now regained freedom from high pathogenicity avian influenza in accordance with international guidelines published by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE).

“This is an important step in re-establishing export markets that have imposed restrictions on Australian poultry or poultry products and thus maintaining the competitiveness of Australian producers.

“In implementing the response, Victoria has had to rise to unprecedented operational challenges. I look forward to seeing movement restrictions being lifted in the coming weeks.

“Perhaps the greatest challenge for the Victorian Government has been managing the disease response while complying with COVID-19 social distancing and movement restrictions forcing services to operate virtually, requiring rapid uptake of new technology and procedures.

“It has been extremely pleasing to see the secondment of government veterinarians from New South Wales, Queensland and the Commonwealth to bolster the response capacity, along with on-going support in the field from private veterinary practitioners.

“This is an excellent example of the cooperation that allows the efficient and effective operation of animal health systems in Australia.

“The strains of low pathogenicity avian influenza detected during the response have also been effectively resolved, with extensive testing showing no further evidence of any avian influenza virus in Victorian poultry.

“The Australian Government continues to work with states and territories and with industry to raise awareness of avian influenza and contributes to programs to better understand the circulation of these viruses in wild birds.”

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