



the
**LIMESTONE
COAST**

H5 BIRD FLU OPERATOR TOOLKIT

Last updated: 17 August 2026

For Limestone Coast tourism businesses, operators and community partners
Prepared by Regional Development Australia Limestone Coast

PURPOSE OF THIS TOOLKIT

Highly pathogenic avian influenza H5N1, commonly known as H5 bird flu, has been detected in South Australia. It's understandable if tourism operators, staff and visitors have questions.

This toolkit is here to help Limestone Coast operators understand what H5 bird flu is, where to find current information, what to do if sick or dead wildlife is spotted, and how to keep operating calmly, safely and responsibly.

The key message for bird flu incidents or sightings is:

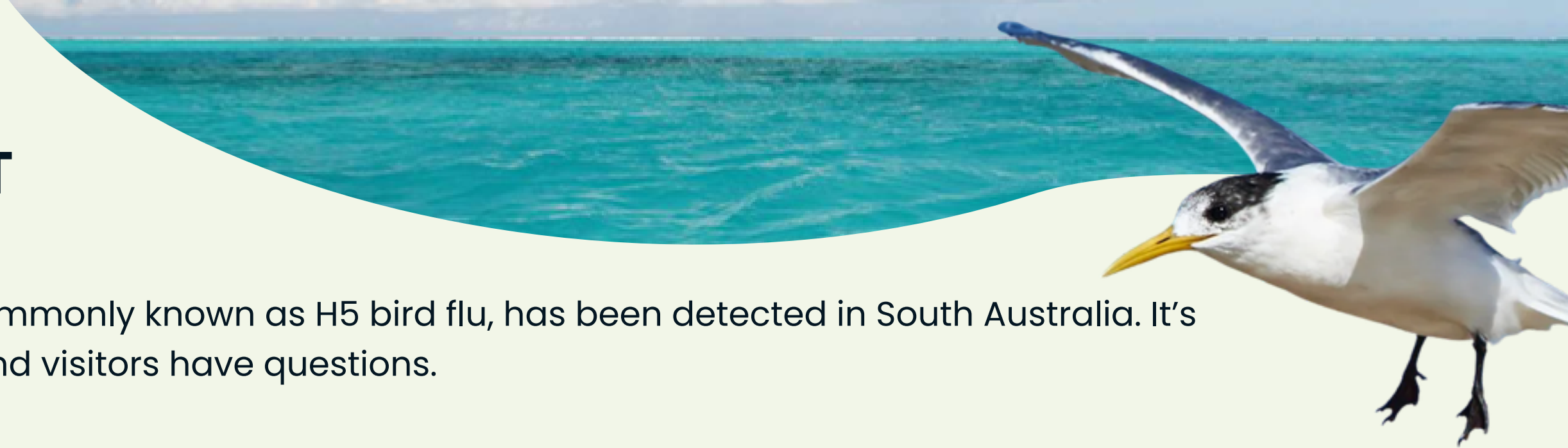
AVOID. RECORD. REPORT.

If you see sick or dead birds or wildlife, don't touch them. Keep visitors and pets away, record what you can if it's safe, and report it to the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888.

The key message for visitors is:

The Limestone Coast remains open and welcoming to visitors.

Visitors can keep enjoying Limestone Coast beaches, national parks, wildlife, accommodation, food and wine, and nature-based experiences while following current official advice.



WHAT IS H5 BIRD FLU?

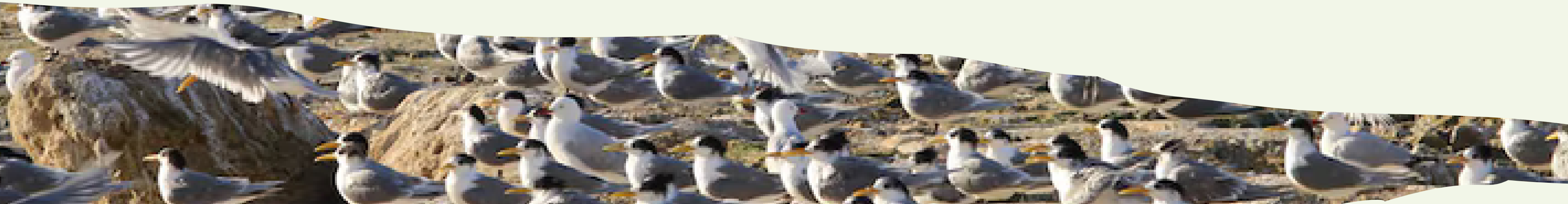
H5 bird flu, also known as highly pathogenic avian influenza H5N1, is a serious virus that mainly affects birds. It can also affect some mammals, including marine mammals such as seals, sea lions and dolphins.

Overseas, the virus has had major impacts on wild birds, poultry and some mammal species. In Australia, government and biosecurity agencies are keeping a close watch and coordinating preparedness and response work nationally and across the states and territories.

Bird flu is different from seasonal human influenza. Human infections are rare and generally associated with close contact with infected animals or contaminated environments.

H5 bird flu is being managed as a national biosecurity matter. South Australia is working with the Australian Government and other jurisdictions through coordinated surveillance and response arrangements.

For tourism operators, the main thing is to stay informed, follow official advice and report sick or dead wildlife without going near it or touching it.



SIGNS TO LOOK OUT FOR

H5 bird flu can affect species in different ways. Some animals may look unwell, while others may die suddenly without obvious signs.

Possible signs in birds

- Sudden death
- Weakness, difficulty standing or inability to fly
- Unusual movements, including a twisted neck, tremors, circling or seizures
- Drooping posture or ruffled feathers
- Breathing difficulties, including coughing, sneezing, panting or open-mouth breathing
- Swelling around the head or neck
- Diarrhoea
- Reduced or unusual egg production in poultry or other kept birds

Possible signs in mammals

- Tremors, poor coordination or unusual movements
- Seizures
- Difficulty breathing
- Nasal discharge or excessive drooling
- Unusual behaviour
- Sudden death

These signs don't necessarily mean an animal has H5 bird flu. Don't approach, touch or try to diagnose sick or dead wildlife. Record the location and report the sighting so the right authorities can assess it.



WHEN SHOULD YOU REPORT

Continue to report sick or dead birds or other wildlife, particularly unusual mortality events or animals showing possible signs of disease.

This can include:

- Sick or dead seabirds, shorebirds, waterbirds, birds of prey or scavenging birds
- Groups of sick or dead wild birds in the same location
- Birds or wildlife displaying unusual behaviour, poor coordination, breathing difficulties or other signs of illness
- Sick or dead marine mammals, including seals, sea lions or dolphins
- Sudden or unexplained illness or death in poultry, pet birds or other kept birds

Don't touch or move the animal. Keep visitors, children and pets away, record the location and what you saw, and report it as soon as you can.

Operators with poultry, pet birds or other kept birds should also contact their veterinarian if they notice unusual illness or unexplained deaths.

EMERGENCY ANIMAL DISEASE HOTLINE: 1800 675 888





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CURRENT SITUATION

Across SA and the Limestone Coast

CURRENT SITUATION IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

The South Australian Government's dedicated birdflu.sa.gov.au website is the central place to find current advice, reporting information, resources and the interactive map.

From 17 August, the website's interactive map is intended to show the broader picture of H5 bird flu in South Australia, including previously reported events.

PIRSA continues to encourage South Australians to be vigilant and to report sick and dead birds and other wildlife.

AVOID. RECORD. REPORT.

SATC has also introduced an H5 Bird Flu Bulletin for tourism industry updates. Resources include business preparedness information, reporting procedures, visitor information and other industry material.

Operators should check the latest bulletin and official government advice before sharing information with visitors.

To sign up to receive the Bulletin, visit:

<https://tourismmail.sa.com/p/75QV-FFO/sign-up-to-the-satc-bird-flu-bulletin>



CURRENT SITUATION IN THE LIMESTONE COAST

Updated 17 August 2026

PIRSA's 14 August update confirmed that H5 bird flu had been detected in wild birds in South Australia and included a number of Limestone Coast detections. The 12 August testing update recorded positive wild seabird results at locations including Port MacDonnell, Tarpeena, Mount Gambier, Robe, Carpenter Rocks, Beachport, Millicent, Cape Jaffa and Cape Douglas.

The 14 August update also recorded further positive results involving greater crested terns at Padthaway, Port MacDonnell, Southend and Carpenter Rocks; a silver gull at Port MacDonnell; and black-faced cormorants at Carpenter Rocks.

PIRSA's current reporting framework means operators shouldn't treat this page as a complete list of current locations. Use birdflu.sa.gov.au for the latest information and any site-specific advice.

There remain no H5 bird flu detections in poultry or other livestock in the 14 August PIRSA update, and the risk to human health remains low.

RESPONDING TO THE CURRENT SITUATION

Temporary, precautionary changes may be introduced to protect wildlife while keeping visitor access open wherever possible.

Operators, especially commercial tour operators, are encouraged to review risk management and contingency plans now. Think about how your tour program would run if access to a national park, beach, coastal reserve or another key site changed or became temporarily unavailable.

Review itineraries, identify suitable alternative experiences and prepare guest communications in advance. This will make any changes easier to manage and help visitors feel confident.

Operators should also:

- Nominate a staff member to monitor official updates.
- Confirm who can make operational decisions.
- Prepare alternative beaches, coastal stops, routes and viewing locations.
- Brief staff and guides on agreed visitor messaging.
- Have a clear process for contacting affected guests, agents and trade partners.





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WHAT SHOULD TOURISM OPERATORS DO NOW?



THE MAIN ACTION: AVOID, RECORD, REPORT

If you or your staff see sick or dead birds or other wildlife:

AVOID

- Do not touch the animal.
- Do not move, rescue, collect or dispose of the animal unless instructed by authorities.
- Keep guests, children and pets away.
- Avoid contact with feathers, droppings, body fluids, eggs, nesting material or contaminated water/sand/soil.

RECORD

- Record the date and time.
- Record the exact location.
- Note the species, if known.
- Count how many animals are sick or dead.
- Take photos or video only if it is safe and you can keep your distance. **This content is not suitable for consumer facing communications.**

REPORT

- Call the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888.
- Report even if you are unsure.
- Follow any advice given by authorities.



Staff shouldn't move, rescue, collect, dispose of or clean up sick or dead wildlife unless authorities specifically tell them to.

CURRENT VISITOR MESSAGING

Have a response ready for guest bookings and enquiries.

Have a calm, simple response ready for guest bookings and enquiries.

Operators should have a simple response ready if guests ask questions. You don't need to share it proactively unless your business, site, tour route or visitor experience is directly affected, or official advice changes.

Suggested response:

"Authorities are monitoring H5 bird flu in South Australia. The Limestone Coast remains open and welcoming to visitors, and we're keeping a close eye on official advice. If you see sick or dead birds or wildlife during your visit, please don't touch them. Keep children and pets away, and report the sighting to the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888. If official advice changes and affects your booking or itinerary, we'll contact you directly."

Avoid posting dramatic updates or sharing unverified information on social media, websites, booking channels or other communications.

Do not announce a closure or describe an individual animal as a confirmed case unless the relevant authority has confirmed that information.



WHAT SHOULD TOURISM OPERATORS DO NOW?

STAFF BRIEFING

Your staff are on the frontline of visitor communication. A clear, confident and consistent message will help:

Build Visitor Confidence

Visitors feel reassured when staff give the same calm, factual advice.

Protect Your Business

Mixed messages or speculation can create confusion and damage trust. Staff who know the reporting process can respond appropriately.

Support the Limestone Coast

Consistent information helps reinforce the region as transparent, responsible and welcoming, and helps counter misinformation.

Empower Your Team

Briefed staff feel more confident and supported. Clear talking points reduce uncertainty when guests ask difficult questions.

Tip: A quick five-minute team huddle at the start of a shift is a good way to check official updates and remind staff of Avoid. Record. Report.



AVIAN INFLUENZA INFORMATION FOR GUESTS

Consider building a page on your own website with Bird Flu information for your guests with information such as:

Enjoy Your Limestone Coast Experience with Confidence

H5 bird flu has been detected in wild birds in South Australia, including the Limestone Coast. The South Australian Government is monitoring the situation and coordinating the response. The Limestone Coast remains a welcoming visitor destination.

What is Avian Influenza?

Avian influenza is a virus that primarily affects birds. It can also affect some mammals. The current South Australian Government advice states that the risk to human health remains low.

What Does This Mean for Our Tours?

[Operator name] keeps an eye on advice from the South Australian Government and relevant land and wildlife management authorities, and will put any required measures in place if official advice changes.

How Guests Can Help

- Observe wildlife from a respectful distance.
- Never touch, feed or handle sick or dead wild animals.
- Keep children and pets away from sick or dead wildlife.
- Follow guide, staff and land-manager directions.
- Report sick or dead birds or other wildlife to 1800 675 888.

Stay Informed: birdflu.sa.gov.au



WHAT SHOULD TOURISM OPERATORS DO NOW?

Do a quick risk check of your operations

Review itinerary risks and plan ahead for changes. Consider whether your business has contact points where birds or wildlife may gather, including:

- Beaches and foreshores
- Coastal reserves and national parks
- Dunes, rocky shores and headlands
- Jetties, boat ramps and coastal infrastructure
- Walking trails and wildlife-viewing areas
- Areas where seabirds gather, roost or nest
- Outdoor dining, picnic and food-waste areas

These areas are not necessarily unsafe. A quick review helps identify practical precautions and ensures staff know what to do.

Review hygiene and biosecurity basics

- Clean footwear and equipment where relevant.
- Clean vehicles, boats, trailers and mats where relevant.
- Secure bins and food waste.
- Keep domestic birds and pets away from wild birds.
- Provide handwashing or sanitising options where appropriate.
- Follow any additional PIRSA or land-manager directions.



WHAT TO PREPARE FOR?

If the situation escalates, operators may need to act quickly.
Preparing now means you can respond calmly later.



WHAT SHOULD TOURISM OPERATORS PREPARE FOR?



A visitor-facing message, ready but not published

Prepare a short message for your website, booking emails or tour briefings, but only use it if the situation becomes relevant to your business or official advice changes.

Suggested holding message:

“We are following official advice about H5 bird flu and wildlife health in South Australia. Our business remains open and operating as normal unless otherwise advised. If you see sick or dead birds or wildlife during your visit, please do not touch them. Keep children and pets away, record the location if safe, and report it to the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888.”

A cancellation and booking response

“We understand you may have questions. Current South Australian Government advice states that the risk to human health remains low. We are continuing to monitor official updates and follow government guidance. If any official change affects your booking or itinerary, we will contact you directly.”

WHAT SHOULD TOURISM OPERATORS PREPARE FOR?

OPERATOR CHECKLIST

Use this as a simple internal checklist:

- ☐ Brief staff on **Avoid. Record. Report.**
- ☐ Save the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline: 1800 675 888
- ☐ Add the hotline to staff procedures and emergency contacts.
- ☐ Identify beaches, coastal reserves, parks and wildlife areas relevant to your business.
- ☐ Remind staff not to touch or move sick or dead wildlife.
- ☐ Review cleaning and hygiene for footwear, vehicles, boats, equipment and outdoor areas.



- ☐ Keep visitors and pets away from sick or dead wildlife.
- ☐ Brief staff on any current access or restriction arrangements.
- ☐ Ensure customer-facing teams use agreed visitor messaging.
- ☐ Avoid speculation about suspected or confirmed cases.
- ☐ Prepare alternative itinerary options if a site becomes unavailable.
- ☐ Monitor birdflu.sa.gov.au and current PIRSA advice.

Important: This checklist supports business preparedness. It does not replace directions or restrictions issued by PIRSA, SA Health, the Department for Environment and Water, Parks or another authorised agency.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION



HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

Bird Observers Network

The State Government is partnering with Conservation Council SA, Birds SA and BirdLife Australia to deliver a training program empowering birders to contribute to South Australia's bird flu response.

The program has been co-designed with the three groups and draws on local expertise about wildlife in coastal and wetland systems alongside current response plans.

Participants can receive specialised training to identify sick birds that may be showing signs associated with H5 bird flu in the wild and record and report observations to support the State Government's response.

For current information about training and registration, use the South Australian Government's H5 bird flu website and current program information.

Operators can also help by:

- Sharing only current, verified government information.
- Encouraging visitors to avoid touching sick or dead wildlife.
- Reporting observations through the appropriate channel.
- Supporting calm, responsible wildlife viewing.



IF YOU NEED EXTRA SUPPORT

Business pressures can take a toll, particularly during periods of uncertainty. Free and confidential support is available for business owners, staff and community members who may need someone to talk to.

24/7 ONLINE AND TELEPHONE SUPPORT

Regional Access Program

Free professional telephone and online counselling for people aged 15 and over who live or work in regional South Australia.

1300 032 186 | www.saregionalaccess.org.au

Beyond Blue

Free mental health information, counselling and online support.

1300 224 636 | www.beyondblue.org.au

Lifeline

Crisis support for anyone feeling overwhelmed or in distress.

13 11 14 | Text: 0477 13 11 14

BUSINESS OWNER SUPPORT

NewAccess for Small Business Owners

Free, confidential mental health coaching for small business owners and sole traders experiencing stress or feeling overwhelmed. No GP referral is required.

Rural Business Support

Free, independent and confidential financial counselling for regional and small business owners.

1800 836 211



Currency note: This toolkit was reviewed against South Australian Government/PIRSA information available on 17 August 2026.
Operators should check birdflu.sa.gov.au before providing current advice to visitors.



An Australian Government Initiative



**Regional
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