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First case of bird flu in native wildlife detected in SA seabird

Australia's first case of H5 bird flu in native wildlife has been detected in a seabird in South Australia as extensive surveillance continues across the state.

The bird – a greater crested tern – was found dead at the Robe Marina in the state's South East and was reported to the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on Tuesday 7 July.

It was collected the same day and has undergone testing at Gribbles at PIRSA's Glenside facility and at the CSIRO's Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness (ACDP). The tests confirmed H5 bird flu this morning.

Importantly, while this is the first confirmed detection in native wildlife, it is being treated as an isolated incident.

There remains no detections in poultry or any signs of mass mortalities anywhere in Australia.

This result comes as a further two giant petrels – one found at Emu Bay, Kangaroo Island and the other at Port Vincent, Yorke Peninsula – which were suspected of having H5 bird flu have also been confirmed by the ACDP.

This takes the state's total to five confirmed cases of H5 bird flu, all in wild seabirds.

Ongoing surveillance will continue across the state, including aerial patrols with helicopters, planes and drones, and field surveillance crews.

The largest aerial survey undertaken in South Australia in more than four decades was completed last week, covering almost 5,000 kilometres of coastline, islands and reefs and no evidence of widespread impacts from H5 bird flu on wildlife.

South Australia has been preparing for H5 bird flu for the past few years, with the State and Federal Governments investing a combined \$8.1 million into PIRSA to boost its emergency response capabilities, surveillance, diagnostics, workforce capability and overall readiness.

A further \$3.5 million has been invested into the Department for Environment and Water from the Federal Government to support preparedness and resilience building activities for the environment and at-risk wildlife.

A series of community information sessions on H5 bird flu are being rolled out to ensure the public has the most up to date information and can ask questions about the response:

- **Kangaroo Island** – Kingscote Town Hall, Kingscote – Thursday, 16 July, Kangaroo Island, 6pm to 7.30pm
- **Yorke Peninsula** – Yorketown Town Hall, Yorketown – Wednesday, 22 July, 6pm to 7.30pm
- **Metropolitan Adelaide** – Venue TBC – Monday 27 July, 6pm to 7.30pm
- **Adelaide Plains** – Port Parham Sports and Social Club, Dublin – Thursday, 6 August, 6 to 7.30pm.

More community information sessions are being planned, for the latest information visit birdflu.sa.gov.au

What you can do

The community is encouraged to report any dead or sick birds or wildlife showing signs of bird flu. Possible signs of bird flu in birds include:

- multiple sick or dead birds in one location
- weakness, inability to stand or fly
- neurological signs or abnormal behaviour
- swelling or discolouration
- respiratory distress.

If you see sick or dead birds or other wildlife, do not touch them.

Avoid contact. **Record** what you see. **Report** it to the **Emergency Animal Disease Hotline** on 1800 675 888 from anywhere in Australia.

For more information on bird flu visit birdflu.gov.au

Quotes attributable to Clare Scriven

This detection of H5 bird flu in a native seabird is unfortunate though not unexpected given we cannot control how birds mingle in the wild.

The fact that we have located this single bird is a testament to the public, who have become our eyes across the state and are reporting to the EAD hotline at around 100 calls per day.

Thankfully, across Australia there have only been coastal detections in individual seabirds, and no sign of mass mortalities or detections in poultry.

We are rolling out a series of community information sessions across the state, with more to planned, and I encourage anyone interested to come along to learn more about how we are responding to this situation.

We are also continuing to engage closely with the poultry industry, wildlife carers and other interested parties to ensure South Australians are kept up to date with what we are doing.

Quotes attributable to South Australian Chief Veterinary Officer, Dr Skye Fruean

It's a fact of life that we cannot control the movement of wild birds in and out of our state and as a result, we also knew this was going to happen.

While it is assumed this bird mingled with migratory seabirds that had H5 bird flu on the coast or offshore islands, we can never know for sure.

What is important is how we respond. The reporting of any sick or dead birds or other wildlife to our hotline is critical for us to understand how and where bird flu is entering South Australia.