

On Wednesday, August 6, information will be sent to all farmer members of the Egg Producers Federation of New Zealand (EPFNZ) on the membership database. This information will facilitate a vote on the EPFNZ's decision to join the Poultry Industries Operation Agreement, which is between the Government (represented by the Ministry for Primary Industries) and the EPFNZ and PIANZ.

For further information, please visit the EPFNZ website in the member section.

An HPAI strain that led to an outbreak on a North Otago farm last December resulted in the loss of 160,000 laying birds. This was not the highly contagious H5N1 strain, but it still had a devastating impact on the affected farm. The H5N1 strain is far more damaging and has led to unprecedented losses of both wild birds and poultry (layers and meat) worldwide, and has now reached Antarctica. Currently, it has not reached New Zealand, Australia, or the Pacific Islands. Still, its ability to infect wild birds, who then spread the disease, means it presents an unprecedented threat to the NZ poultry industry.

Work has been underway for many months to ensure we can respond as quickly as possible if it, or other serious disease threats, are prepared to both promptly react and manage the ongoing impacts of the disease on the industry.

EPFNZ has been working with the Government and PIANZ on an HPAI readiness and response plan, formalised in an Operational Agreement (OA). Negotiations on this OA were undertaken as part of the Government Industry Agreement for Biosecurity Readiness and Response (GIA), which the EPFNZ joined last year.

The resulting Operational Agreement is designed to ensure the EPFNZ is as prepared as possible for a potential outbreak. It outlines how a response effort would be funded and prepared for long-term management where that is an agreed approach.

We now request farmer member approval for EPFNZ to join the Operational Agreement. PIANZ and the Government have already signed the document.

Why is there a voting process?

The EPFNZ is a body funded under a Commodity Levy, and its farmers are the members. The EPFNZ Board believes that, due to the importance of the topic and the potential member liability, a member vote is appropriate.

How the voting process will work

All EPFNZ members will receive the voting information on Wednesday, August 6, with more details on the Operational Agreement. The voting form will ask members to confirm support for the EPFNZ agreeing to join the Operational Agreement by voting either YES or NO.

Online voting will be open until **2 pm on Friday, August 22**. You must return the vote by e-mail to tipi@pianz.org.nz

What the agreement covers

The Operational Agreement ensures that the EPF has a seat at the One Health table to guide Readiness and Response for the layer hen industry.. It outlines industry obligations to undertake specific actions to protect the poultry industry and share readiness and response costs. It also provides signatories with a direct, legally binding say in decision-making.

- **Readiness actions** are specific activities to ensure EPF members have the proper systems and resources in place to deal with an outbreak. It includes things like staff training, business continuity planning, and participation in exercises and simulations.
- **Response activities** are actions directly related to responding to an outbreak, (including things like disease tracing, movement controls, culling, disposal and compensation..

The Operational Agreement sets out the shared objectives of all parties affected by an HPAI outbreak. It establishes how the partnership operates in practice, including governance and decision-making arrangements, and, critically, how costs are split between the Government and the poultry industry. It also details how a specific industry's share is divided among the various parts of the sector, based on their relative economic size and relative risk.

Key things to note

EPFNZ is a signatory to the Government Industry Agreement (GIA), which was signed in December 2024.

The GIA is a key mechanism for preparing for pests and diseases of concern, with several successful responses run under the Agreement.

An operational agreement under the GIA details specific decision-making and cost-sharing arrangements should there be a response impacting the industry.

- EPFNZ will not sign the Operational Agreement without the support of our levy payers. Please have your say.
- Voting NO does not mean that EPFNZ would avoid costs, but voting YES would give us a say in how the layer hen sector contributes to those costs and how money is spent in a response that assists the layer industry specifically.
- The Poultry Industry Association of New Zealand (PIANZ), which represents all poultry meat processors and poultry meat farmers and MPI have already agreed to the Operational Agreement.
- This Operational Agreement concept, under GIA, has support across all the other sectors of the agricultural industry.
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• **Where to get further information**

There will be a dedicated page on the members section of the EPFNZ website, which will include Frequently Asked Questions (that we'll update as questions are received).

We will host a webinar, where you'll have the opportunity to ask questions.

Check the EPF weekly newsletter for information on the webinar.

Key dates

- Wednesday, August 6: Voting information sent to farmers.
- Friday, August 22: (2 pm): Voting closes.
- Late August 2025: If approved, EPFNZ will sign the Operation Agreement, along with PIANZ and the Ministry of Primary Industries.

- As of September 1, 2025, the Agreement takes effect, noting that it includes coverage of the 2024 H7N6 response in Otago.