



Media Release

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NZ's Poultry Industry urges farmers to get ready for stricter biosecurity measures to manage Avian Influenza

The Boards of the Egg Producers Federation (EPF) and the Poultry Industry Association (PIANZ) are supportive of the government announcement of new proposals for long-term management of high pathogenicity avian influenza H5N1.

"The proposed biosecurity regulations will require compliance from egg and poultry farmers to strengthen their own biosecurity standards. Our members can take part in the consultation that opens today, and shape the proposed regulations with feedback," says Michael Brooks, Executive Director of EPF and PIANZ.

"Once the consultation process is closed and the feedback considered, some, or all of the proposed regulations will be introduced. It is important to note that with the right levels of biosecurity in place, even the highly contagious H5N1 strain of avian influenza can be successfully managed.

"Simply put, with H5N1, strong levels of biosecurity are the difference between our birds and businesses surviving, and not," Michael Brooks said.

Biosecurity Minister Andrew Hoggard has reinforced the need for a long-term approach that manages the disease through regulatory incentives for good biosecurity practices.

MPI and industry are working together to prepare for the possible arrival of HPAI H5N1. "Our members need to treat the arrival of HPAI H5N1 as a matter of 'when' rather than 'if' it arrives in New Zealand," says Michael Brooks.

Michael Brooks says the free range layer hens are most at risk of mixing with wild birds on the range. "H5N1 is a disease spread by wild birds, so free range layer hens are especially at higher risk. Farmers cannot sit back, hoping for the best.

“We know from our overseas research that every country with high standards of biosecurity is more successful at reducing the impact of H5N1 on their egg and poultry industries. Those who haven’t, quickly pay the price, and I don’t want our farmers to go through that.”

The proposed regulations include:

- a requirement for commercial poultry operators to have an avian biosecurity control programme in place that sets out how their business will prevent and manage a potential H5N1 outbreak
- a requirement for poultry operators/owners to meet appropriate biosecurity standards, including standards for activities such as depopulation, disposal, cleaning and disinfection
- a requirement for operators/owners to keep records and provide information when required
- a requirement that avian biosecurity programmes be audited to ensure they are fit for purpose
- establishing offences and penalties (fines) for those who do not comply with the regulations.

Michael Brooks said MPI has proposed these regulations to encourage stronger, consistent biosecurity practices, and early reporting of infection so the national flock is better protected.

“This consultation period gives our farmers the opportunity to consider how the proposals will affect them and submit their feedback to help shape the outcome. These proposals are likely to involve costs to the farmer, but when it comes to H5N1, strong biosecurity practices need to be viewed as an investment.”

Feedback from the consultation will determine whether some, or all of the proposals will be introduced as regulations.

The discussion documents and information on how to make a submission are on MPI’s website at: <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/consultations/proposed-regulations-for-managing-high-pathogenicity-avian-influenza-h5n1-in-poultry>, and on the Industry’s member only websites.

New Zealand’s first HPAI case study:

EPF Board Chair, John McKay is also a farmer, and knows better than anyone how hard HPAI can hit a business.

“When HPAI H7N6 hit my commercial egg farm in North Otago last December, it was like nothing we’d experienced before. The most devastating part was having to cull the whole flock to prevent them suffering a death from HPAI, and protect the surrounding farms from a similar fate.

“Our farm had good biosecurity and MPI was quick to respond and provide support, so we managed to contain and eradicate it quickly. That wasn’t H5N1 however. The response to that will be different.

“This consultation is our opportunity to say what will work and what won’t for our individual needs. The regulations are designed to motivate consistent biosecurity, so we need to ensure they’re fit for our purpose.”

Ends.

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