



Australian Chicken Meat Federation (ACMF) Inc

AI Preparedness Document for Australian Meat Chicken Growers

THE AUSTRALIAN CHICKEN MEAT FEDERATION INC. (ACMF), APRIL 2006

This document draws together information to help those in the chicken meat industry to prepare for avian influenza (AI). The important message from the ACMF to growers is that biosecurity is the industry's main defence and checking and improving biosecurity arrangements is more important than ever.

The main message from the ACMF to consumers is that AI does not pose a food safety risk because thoroughly cooked chicken meat is free of any viruses. As well, it is highly unlikely sick poultry would be processed for consumption.



AVIAN INFLUENZA – IT'S NOT IN YOUR FOOD.

Australia is currently free of notifiable avian influenza (AI) and there is no AI in any commercial chicken meat flocks.

There have not been any known cases in the world where humans have contracted AI from eating properly cooked poultry.

The heat of normal cooking destroys the viruses that cause avian influenza. The avian influenza virus is destroyed within a minute of exposure to 71°C. This temperature is well below that reached when cooking chicken meat properly (see below).

PROPER HANDLING AND COOKING IS IMPORTANT

The following are common steps, which will ensure the continued quality and safety of poultry products - e.g. chicken and turkey.

- Keep the product refrigerated or frozen until ready to cook
- Thaw frozen foods in the refrigerator or microwave
- Keep raw meat and poultry separate from other foods
- Wash working surfaces (including cutting boards), utensils and hands after they have been in contact with raw meat or poultry
- Cook thoroughly
- Keep hot foods hot
- Refrigerate leftovers immediately or discard

The chart (right) provides a guide for cooking poultry meat to ensure it is not only safe to eat, but also the best quality.

WE KNOW HOW TO HANDLE AN OUTBREAK

Australia is a world leader in biosecurity and has comprehensive programs and procedures for the detection and eradication of any outbreak.

In the unlikely event of an outbreak in poultry, an infected farm would immediately be quarantined and depopulated to control and eradicate any further spread. This eradication procedure would be carried out using agreed national standards and in accordance with international guidelines.

No poultry product would be allowed to leave an infected farm. Any poultry products that may have left an infected farm previously would be immediately traced and recalled.

ALL CHICKEN MEAT IS LOCALLY GROWN

Current Federal legislation in Australia bans the importation of all raw chicken meat and has done for many years. All chicken meat consumed in Australia is produced in this country. Any chicken meat or live bird found as a result of screening activities by quarantine officers at ports, airports and international mail centres, is confiscated and destroyed in line with established policies and procedures.

COOKING GUIDE

- Cook all poultry meat to at least 74°C throughout
- Juices to run clear
- No pink meat

“The heat of normal cooking destroys the viruses that cause avian influenza.”

For further information contact ACMF on (02) 9929 4077 or visit us at www.chicken.org.au

Symptoms of AI in birds

“If you are suspicious that a flock in your care may have avian influenza, it must be reported immediately.”

“Following good livestock farming practices is the best and simplest way to achieve biosecurity.”



LOOKING FOR AI SYMPTOMS IN YOUR FLOCK

When should you be suspicious? Please seek professional veterinary advice immediately if:

- Birds become ill quickly (e.g. from normal to gravely ill within 24–48 hours)
- There is significant and unexplained drop in egg production
- The majority of the flock is ill or dead
- Serious respiratory signs are observed like:
 - Swelling, redness or blotchy patches on the skin of the head, comb, wattles or neck
 - Coughing, sneezing or rasping respiration
- A drop in feed intake and/or water intake is noted
- Typical ‘sick bird’ signs are observed like ruffled feathers, closed eyes, weakness
- Watery diarrhoea is present
- Birds show signs of nerve problems (tilted head, cannot walk or stand)

Avian influenza is a notifiable disease. If you are suspicious that a flock in your care may have avian influenza, it must be reported immediately to your company service manager, your company veterinarian, or the Emergency Disease Watch Hotline on 1800 675 888.

Biosecurity Checklist

Livestock disease can be catastrophic for farmers and the farming industry through the loss of income and the loss of markets. Following good livestock farming practices is the best and simplest way to achieve biosecurity - to protect your flocks, your profits and your industry.

The Biosecurity Fact Sheet (available from Animal Health Australia) provides answers to frequently raised questions. It also has a simple checklist of the most critical areas of biosecurity control such as clean water (read more under Effective Water Treatment in this issue), footbaths, wild bird and rodent control etc.

For more detailed information, the best source is the National Biosecurity Manual, which is available from: www.chicken.org.au, the ACMF website.

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Effective Water Treatment

WATER TREATMENT CHECKLIST

Reminder - Untreated drinking water should not be supplied to farmed birds. All water that comes from sources other than the mains (eg from dams, rivers, or bores*) should be treated on the farm before being used in sheds.

* Bore water should be tested, and if not of potable water standard, must be treated.

The objective of water treatment is to minimise bacteria, viruses, algae and other organisms that birds consume in their drinking water and that they are exposed to through shed cooling systems. Water provided to birds for drinking and that used for cooling must be treated. Washdown water should also be treated.

CHLORINATION

Chlorination is an excellent way to effectively treat your farm water. However, chlorination will only be effective if the water is already relatively free of organic matter and solids. Filtration of the water supply prior to chlorination will nearly always be necessary.

There are a number of different chlorination systems available to poultry farmers. These can be obtained from a range of specialist water treatment companies, pumping companies or swimming pool suppliers. Assistance with the installation, operation and maintenance of these systems is usually offered by the supplier, as are kits for monitoring chlorination levels.

To effectively treat a poultry water supply, the water with chlorine at a concentration of 5 ppm (or equivalent) must be held for a minimum of 1 to 2 hours in a holding tank.

This may require the use of a two-tank system, where water is being consumed by birds from one tank, while the other tank is refilled and stored with freshly chlorinated water until the required contact time of 1–2 hours has elapsed. Chlorine is more effective if the pH of the water is between 6 and 7 i.e. slightly acidic.

The chlorine concentration at the drinker must be at between 1 and 2 ppm (or equivalent) to ensure any contamination that might have occurred in the lines between the holding tank and the drinker has been effectively treated.

Water chlorination levels from drinkers in the shed should be monitored at least twice weekly to ensure the system is effectively treating the incoming water supply.

AS A GUIDE:

- Fill the test tube with water from drinkers in the shed
- Insert test strips (provided in the test kit) into the test tube
- Compare the colour of the chlorine square on the test strip with the chlorine colour squares on the standard colour chart (provided)
- Record the concentration level of the colour on the standard colour chart with that which most closely matches the test strip colour
- If the chlorine concentration is less than 2 ppm or greater than 5 ppm the concentration should be rechecked in one hour. If the concentration remains outside these limits, the unit should be adjusted and the concentrations checked again in 1 hour.

Alternative chlorination monitoring systems are available from companies that supply chlorination equipment.

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UV TREATMENT

Ultraviolet (UV) treatment is an alternative method of treating farm water. However, UV will only be effective on **clean, filtered** water (not turbid water), and should only be considered on farms where the lines from the storage tank to the drinkers and the drinkers themselves are clean, in good repair and are well maintained, such that the possibility of contamination after UV treatment is minimised. UV treatment units and water filtering systems are available from specialist water treatment or pumping companies.

Links to More Information

www.chicken.org.au

Australian Chicken Meat Federation (ACMF)

The Australian Chicken Meat Federation (ACMF) is the peak coordinating body for participants (growers, processors) in the chicken meat industry in Australia. The ACMF coordinates the activities of the State Chicken Meat Councils and makes recommendations to Councils on matters concerning the industry. Chicken meat is an Australian grown product and no raw chicken meat is imported into Australia from any country.

www.outbreak.gov.au

Australian Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

This website was developed collaboratively across State, Territory and Australian Government agricultural agencies to provide a single, user-friendly website through which people can access information about Australian responses to outbreaks of animal and plant pests and diseases. The content for this site was developed collaboratively, with all of the State, Territory and Australian Government agricultural agencies working together to provide the most up-to-date information available.

www.daff.gov.au

Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS)

The Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) is part of the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF). AQIS

employees provide quarantine inspection for international passengers, cargo, mail, animals, plants and animal or plant products arriving in Australia, and inspection and certification for a range of agricultural products exported from Australia.

Thanks to Australia's strict quarantine policies which ban chicken imports to protect Australian chickens from disease, no raw chicken meat imports are allowed to enter Australia from overseas.

www.news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/world/2005/bird_flu/default.stm

This is a great site to explore if you are interested in some of the international views and developments.

www.health.gov.au

The Federal Department of Health and Ageing is where you can obtain information about the preparedness for human influenza pandemic. While the human pandemic disease is often linked with media reports of avian influenza (a bird disease), these are two quite distinct diseases.

www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza
World Health Organization (WHO)

World Health Organization is the United Nations specialised agency for health. WHO's objective, as set out in its Constitution, is the attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health. They have a section devoted to avian influenza.



Australian Chicken Meat Federation (ACMF) Inc

Level 7, 122 Walker Street,
North Sydney NSW 2059

T (02) 9929 4077 F (02) 9925 0627

E acmf@chicken.org.au

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or visit us at www.chicken.org.au