



CHICKEN GROWER'S GUIDE

# Early Action in a Potential Emergency Disease

[www.chicken.org.au](http://www.chicken.org.au)



## Disclaimer

This Guide has been developed to provide general guidance to assist you to protect both your own farm and the poultry industry more broadly from spread of emergency disease. It is designed to provide advice on steps that should be taken **immediately**, should there be a concern regarding suspicious disease on your property **or** in the event of an emergency disease in your area, and only applies until such time that your processor or state disease authority (e.g. state Chief Veterinary Officer or Department of Agriculture/DPI representative) provides alternative instructions. Any additional or subsequent measures or instructions (including movement controls and standard operating procedures) imposed by your state's Chief Veterinary Officer or state DoA or DPI have precedence over these guidelines and must be adhered to.

While care has been taken preparing this Guide it does not constitute legal advice. You should seek legal or other professional advice to consider the application of the laws relevant to these matters and to your individual circumstances.

## OVERVIEW

This guide has been developed to assist chicken growers to understand what they need to do, immediately, if there is suspicion of an emergency poultry disease on their farm or if there is an emergency poultry disease in their area

An emergency poultry disease (EAD) is defined as a disease that either:

- is a known disease that does not normally occur in Australia, and it is considered to be in the national interest for the country to remain free of - the most obvious case in chickens is *avian influenza*.
- is a variation of a disease that does occur in Australia which, if established here, would have a significant national impact – an example of this would be *very virulent Newcastle disease*.
- is a serious infectious disease of unknown or uncertain cause, which may be an entirely new disease and which appears to have the potential to cause significant national impacts.

In practice, EADs relevant to the chicken industry are avian diseases which are likely to have severe consequences for poultry productivity, trade or possibly even human health. As a result, there are nationally agreed arrangements in place for their containment and eradication.

The diseases of most concern in this respect are avian influenza and Newcastle disease.

This guide is designed to help growers protect both their own farm and the poultry industry more broadly from spread of emergency disease. It aims to help growers understand what signs they should be looking out for in their flocks, what they must do if they see these signs, and what they should do *immediately* if there is suspicion of an emergency disease on their farm. It also provides guidance as to what actions you should take, *immediately*, if there is an EAD outbreak in your area, but not on your farm.

The guide provides an overview of what you should do to in two circumstances:

**01 THERE IS A HIGH LEVEL OF SUSPICION OF AN EMERGENCY DISEASE OR SIGNIFICANT, UNEXPLAINED DISEASE ON YOUR PROPERTY**

**02 THERE IS AN EMERGENCY POULTRY DISEASE IN YOUR AREA, BUT NOT ON YOUR FARM**

## WHAT IS SUSPICIOUS AND WHEN TO REPORT

If there is a high level of suspicion of an emergency disease (such as avian influenza or Newcastle disease) or significant, unexplained disease on your property.

You are not expected to be able to recognize or diagnose emergency poultry diseases, and the clinical signs of such diseases can be seen in other poultry diseases. However, you should be on the lookout for the signs listed below and report them to your company immediately for further investigation.

If any of the following signs are identified, immediately cease movement of people and equipment into and out of affected shed and farm until further investigation. A relevant company representative (such as a veterinarian, serviceman or livestock manager) must be contacted **immediately** with a direct conversation (text, email or other electronic messaging is not sufficient)<sup>1</sup>.

1 MORTALITIES	2 CLINICAL SIGNS	3 DECLINES
Unexplained disease-related mortalities of <b>1% or more</b> in 24 hours	<p><b>Unusual symptoms</b> in the flock, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Severe respiratory diseases symptoms</li> <li>• Nervous signs</li> <li>• Severe flock depression</li> </ul>	<p>Any decline of <b>5% per day</b> for 2 consecutive days in one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feed consumption</li> <li>• Water consumption</li> <li>• Egg production (breeders)</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> If your initial company contact fails to respond to your call (you should leave a detailed message), then escalate your contact to another level in the company. If you have not received a call back from your company on the same day and you have reason to suspect an emergency disease (such as avian influenza or Newcastle disease) then you should ring the emergency disease hotline: 1800 675 888

## CHECKLIST 1

### AN EMERGENCY DISEASE IS SUSPECTED OR SIGNIFICANT UNEXPLAINED DISEASE PRESENT ON YOUR FARM<sup>2</sup>

If a notifiable or emergency disease is suspected, your company will notify the relevant State department, who will investigate and institute any further actions necessary.

In the meantime, here's what you should do:

- Cease all movement of people, animals, vehicles, litter and equipment to and from the affected shed and to and from the farm until further advice / instruction is received from your company or state Department.

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- Stay on the property.

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- Shut and lock the front gates.

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- Lock all shed doors.

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- Ensure all footbaths and hand-wash stations are appropriately maintained at all times.

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- Use footbaths and hand-wash stations both on entering and leaving all sheds.

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- Use a dedicated set of shed boots for affected shed/s.

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- Double check that all dead chickens / dead bird disposal areas are covered or secured, so not accessible to pests or wild birds; cease removal from site immediately i.e. do not allow any dead chickens to be removed from the farm.

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- If free-range, return all chickens to their sheds as soon as possible and shut the sheds.

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- Minimise all staff movements into unaffected sheds on the farm. Where possible, designated staff member/s are to service the affected shed/s only. However, if it is deemed essential for the same individual(s) to enter apparently unaffected sheds, then they should only do so after a head-to-toe shower between shed entries and a complete change of clothes, footwear, hair covering and breathing protection after servicing an affected shed. Disinfect hands and boots prior to entering a shed in all cases.

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- Used farm and/or protective clothing and all used personal protection equipment must remain on the property.

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- Contact all staff (either on or off farm at the time) and advise them to not have any contact with birds, particularly poultry, and to thoroughly clean and disinfect all clothing that they have worn on farm and to stay at home until receiving further advice.

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- Contact all scheduled visitors (e.g. dead bird pick up contractors) and advise that they should not visit until further notice.

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- As some serious diseases (such as AI) can have potential impacts on human health, ensure all people who enter sheds use appropriate well-fitting facemasks, goggles, gloves, hairnets and full length coveralls. Each farm should carry an emergency kit with appropriate safety gear (see "What to have ready ..." in Checklist 3 for details). Exercise good levels of personal hygiene.

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- Review visitor records for the batch to ensure all records are accurate as this may be a critical document in the event of exotic disease being confirmed.

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<sup>2</sup> These measures should also be implemented if an emergency disease has been confirmed on your property, but the state Department has not yet arrived to implement quarantine measures or issued instructions to you or your company.

## CHECKLIST 2

### IF EMERGENCY DISEASE IN YOUR AREA<sup>3</sup>

If there is an emergency poultry disease, such as Avian Influenza or Newcastle disease, in your area, but not on your farm.

After first confirming with your company that an emergency poultry disease has been found (or is strongly suspected) in your area, the following immediate measures should be adopted. These measures should remain in place until further advice or directions are received from your company or from your State Chief Veterinary Officer:

- Gates must be kept locked.

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- Shed doors must be locked at night.

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- Facilities for the cleaning and disinfection of equipment coming on and off the production area<sup>4</sup> must be established and used.

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- No visitors are to enter the production area unless absolutely essential. Company personnel to discontinue routine visits to other farms except on suspicion of problems. All other scheduled visits, such as audits, must be cancelled.

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- Repairs and maintenance – No routine work; only emergency work to be carried out.

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- Company approval must be sought and granted before any visitor entry.
  - A. Essential visits – head-to-toe shower before and after visit. A complete change of clothes, footwear, hair covering and face mask is required prior to entering the production area. Farm and/or protective clothing and all personal protection equipment used on your farm must remain on the property.
  - B. Any vehicle (e.g. feed trucks, gas) which must enter the property must have its wheels and driver steps washed and disinfected before and after going onto the property. Vehicle driver cabins must also be sanitised inside (e.g. with Glen 20 disinfectant).
  - C. Free-range farms within 10 km of an infected property should return all chickens to their sheds as soon as possible and shut the sheds.
  - D. No chickens or litter to be moved on or off properties until further notice.

**Further measures (including movement controls) and standard operating procedures (SOPs) will be stipulated by your processor and/or the state's Chief Veterinary Officer as the official response to the emergency disease in your area is implemented.**

<sup>3</sup> Your 'area' would be defined as a broad poultry production region in which there are movements of equipment, vehicles and contractors between farms.

<sup>4</sup> The 'production area' includes the poultry sheds, the ranges used for free range production, the areas used for feed storage and handling and the area immediately surrounding the sheds, including pick-up areas. It may, but does not necessarily, also include other areas of the farm property, such as the manager's home or other land on which the production area is located that is used for livestock or cultivation.

## CHECKLIST 3

### PRE-EMERGENCY CHECKLIST

Following is a checklist of what to have ready in advance of either of the above situations occurring.

- Have an emergency kit with appropriate safety gear on farm at all times. This should include adequate supplies of:
  - well-fitting facemasks and breathing equipment (minimum specification P2),
  - goggles
  - gloves
  - hairnets and
  - full-length coveralls.

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- Have adequate supplies on farm of disinfectants for different purposes e.g. disinfectant for foot-baths, hand sanitiser, vehicle cabins (e.g. Glen 20).

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- A designated wash-down area and facilities to clean vehicles and equipment at the entry point to the production area.

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- Ensure all sheds are lockable.

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- Give consideration to where showering would occur for people entering and leaving the property.

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**For more information**

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