

DISCLAIMER

The World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH, founded as OIE), after performing an administrative and technical screening of a self-declaration concerning the disease-free status of a country, a zone or a compartment ("self-declaration"), as described in the standard operating procedures for self-declarations, reserves the right to publish or not the self-declaration on its website. There shall be no right of appeal from this decision nor any recourse of any kind.

The publication by WOAH of a self-declaration on its website does not reflect the official opinion of WOAH.

Responsibility for the information contained in a self-declaration lies entirely with the WOAH Delegate of the Member concerned.

Neither WOAH nor any person acting on its behalf may be held responsible for:

- (i) any errors, inaccuracies or omissions in the content of a self-declaration;
- (ii) the use which may be made of the information contained in a self-declaration;
- (iii) any direct or indirect consequences of any nature arising from or relating to the use of the information contained in a self-declaration.

Self-declaration of country freedom from infection with high pathogenicity avian influenza viruses by New Zealand

Declaration sent to the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) on 12 September 2025 by Dr Mary Van Andel, WOAH Delegate for New Zealand, Chief Veterinary Officer, Ministry for Primary Industries, New Zealand

1. Introduction

In accordance with the provisions of Articles 1.4.6 and 10.4.6 of the WOAH *Terrestrial Animal Health Code* 2025 (*Terrestrial Code*), the New Zealand Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) is submitting the following documentation for publication by the WOAH, attesting that New Zealand is free from infection with high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) in poultry. The self-declaration of freedom covers the entire country and describes a resolved outbreak of HPAI H7N6 in poultry between November and December 2024. Prior to this occurrence New Zealand was historically free from HPAI. This declaration is effective from 24 April 2025.

A statement of responsibility for this self-declaration, signed by the WOAH Delegate of New Zealand, is contained in Annex I.

2. Evidence that HPAI is a notifiable disease in the entire country

New Zealand comprises three main islands, and a number of small outlying islands in the Southern Pacific Ocean. The national Veterinary Authority with responsibility for coordinating the implementation of WOAH standards sits within the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI). MPI is the government department nationally responsible for regulating the primary production and processing sectors and is the central competent authority responsible for New Zealand's animal health and government veterinary services. There are no sub-national veterinary services. MPI administers the New Zealand Veterinarians Act 2005, and the Veterinary Council of New Zealand (VCNZ) is the statutory body responsible for upholding veterinary standards. All practising veterinarians in New Zealand, clinical or non-clinical, are required to be registered with VCNZ and hold a current annual practising certificate. All veterinarians are required to comply with ongoing professional education requirements.

Further to the above, MPI is the lead organisation for New Zealand's biosecurity system, and is responsible for administering the provisions of the [Biosecurity Act of 1993](#). The overall objectives of the Act are to:

- to exclude, detect, eradicate and effectively manage, pests and unwanted organisms from or within New Zealand; and
- protect animal or human health, the New Zealand economy and the New Zealand environment against the adverse effects that may be associated with risk organisms.

Under sections 44 and 46 of the [Biosecurity Act](#), every person in New Zealand has a responsibility to report to MPI findings that might indicate the presence of notifiable organisms or organisms not normally present in New Zealand. This requirement applies throughout the country. [The Biosecurity \(Notifiable Organisms\) Order 2016](#) lists particular organisms that are required to be notified if suspected of being, or detected, within New Zealand. HPAI has been included as a notifiable organism under this Order and its predecessors since at least 1992.

3. Eradication HPAI from New Zealand

On 1 December 2024, HPAI was identified on a single commercial free-range layer property in the Otago region of the South Island of New Zealand. The HPAI event was reported to the World Organisation of Animal Health (WOAH) on 2 December 2024, [event ID 6077](#). Prior to this outbreak, HPAI had never occurred in New Zealand, with New Zealand's historical freedom status in accordance with the *Terrestrial Code* and underpinned by a general surveillance system,¹ augmented by two decades of national avian influenza virus surveillance in wildlife²

The affected property notified the MPI on 29 November 2024 of a disease event including escalating mortalities and dropping egg production in a single shed. Clinical signs were not typical of HPAI, with no neurological or respiratory signs. The presentation was predominantly gastrointestinal and systemic disease. The MPI National Animal Health Laboratory (AHL – New Zealand's reference laboratory) confirmed the presence of HPAI subtype H7N6. Movement controls were immediately placed on the property, and a biosecurity response was initiated by MPI with an objective of eradicating HPAI from the poultry sector by stamping out. A 10km surveillance zone was implemented around the infected property (IP), and forward and backward contacts were traced and investigated. All poultry on the IP were culled, carcasses and contaminated materials were disposed of under official supervision, and cleaning and disinfection of the property completed.

Genomic analyses established that the H7N6 virus was of domestic origin. The analyses highlighted a 6-nucleotide insertion event, in combination with another single nucleotide variant, which triggered the evolution of an endemic H7 low pathogenic avian influenza virus (LPAI) to HPAI. The investigation concluded the source of infection was the consequence of a spillover event of H7N6 LPAI from wild birds and the subsequent conversion by antigenic drift of the virus into HPAI in poultry on the infected property.

The affected property was geographically isolated; the closest commercial layer property was ten kilometres away and the closest commercial broiler property around 180km away. The IP was part of a corporate group of layer properties and the movements between the South Island properties of this corporate group represented the main risk of disease spread. A tracing period of three weeks prior to the onset of clinical signs (egg drop and mortality) was applied. Three weeks corresponded to one and a half incubation periods, using 14 days as the maximum flock level incubation period³. Movements to and from the IP included movements of live poultry, poultry products, waste, equipment, vehicles, feed and litter, and people. Tracing resulted in 11 properties of medium to high risk being quarantined, investigated and placed under active surveillance (Table 2).

Epidemiological investigations and surveillance did not detect the presence of avian influenza virus on any further poultry farms beyond the index property, despite extensive testing of all connected poultry properties, investigation of suspect reports (both poultry and wildlife), and enhanced surveillance of premises with chickens within a 10km radius of the infected farm.

¹ [Tana T et al \(2025\) The MPI animal general surveillance programme. *Surveillance*, 52 \(2\), 5-9.](#)

² [Marquetoux N et al \(2024\). Avian influenza surveillance programme annual report. *Surveillance*, 51\(3\), 36–42; \[Mulqueen K. \\(2024\\). Poultry health surveillance annual report. *Surveillance*, 51\\(3\\), 79.\]\(#\); \[Lenting B et al. \\(2024\\). Wildlife disease surveillance annual report. *Surveillance*, 51\\(3\\), 46–55;\]\(#\) \[Stanislawek, W. L. et al \\(2024\\). Avian influenza viruses in New Zealand wild birds, with an emphasis on subtypes H5 and H7: Their distinctive epidemiology and genomic properties. *Plos One*, 19\\(6\\), e0303756;\]\(#\) and \[Watts, J et al. \\(2016\\). Avian influenza: Epidemiology and surveillance in New Zealand.\]\(#\)](#)

³ WOAH (2025) *Terrestrial Animal Health Code*. Chapter 10.4. Infection with high pathogenicity avian influenza virus.

Depopulation of the single infected property was completed by 11 December 2024. Disinfection of the infected property was completed by 27 March 2025 and movement restrictions were lifted 24 April 2025. Vaccination was not utilised as a preventative or control measure in any avian population during the outbreak.

This disease event was rapidly detected by the MPI general surveillance system, while the relatively isolated location of the property prevented local spread. This, and the biosecurity controls implemented resulted in the containment of this outbreak to a single property. Genomic analysis of the detected HPAI virus, and extensive response surveillance with negative findings, further support that only the single layer property was infected with H7N6 HPAI. No additional cases of HPAI have been identified since depopulation of the property was completed.

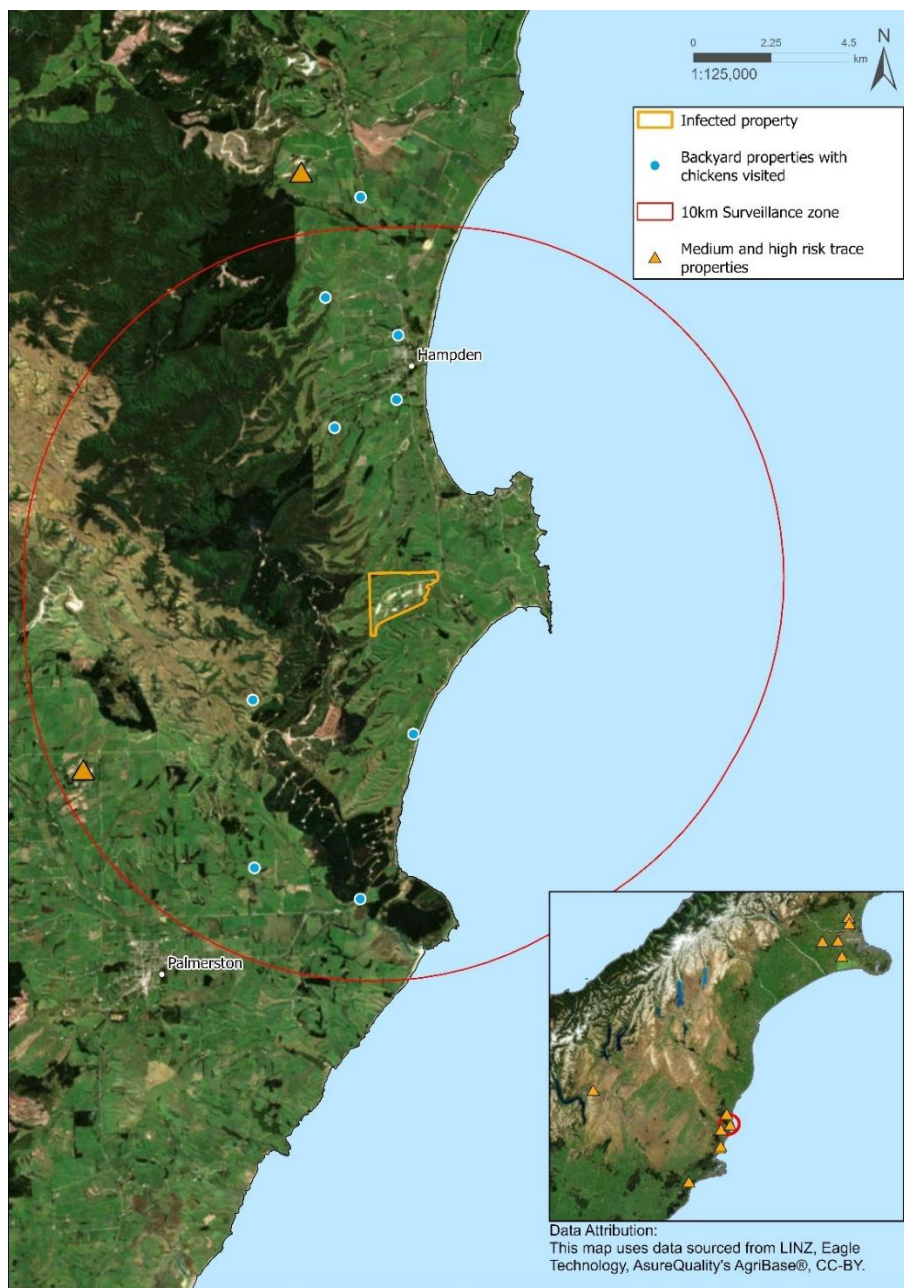


Figure 1. Map showing the location of the Infected property, 10km surveillance zone around the property, locations of the nearest commercial as well as backyard properties. The inlay map shows the eleven poultry premises placed under active surveillance as a result of contact tracing.

4. Surveillance and early warning systems for HPAI in New Zealand

Surveillance for HPAI within New Zealand is multifaceted and includes MPI's general surveillance system, commercial flock health plans, pre-export testing and wild bird surveillance. This ongoing surveillance provides further evidence that the outbreak consisted of only one farm and no further transmission occurred.

4.1. Characterisation of poultry population in New Zealand

The commercial poultry industry in New Zealand is small, consisting of 400 properties. As of December 2024, 230 properties are classified as broiler or breeder properties and 170 as layer properties.

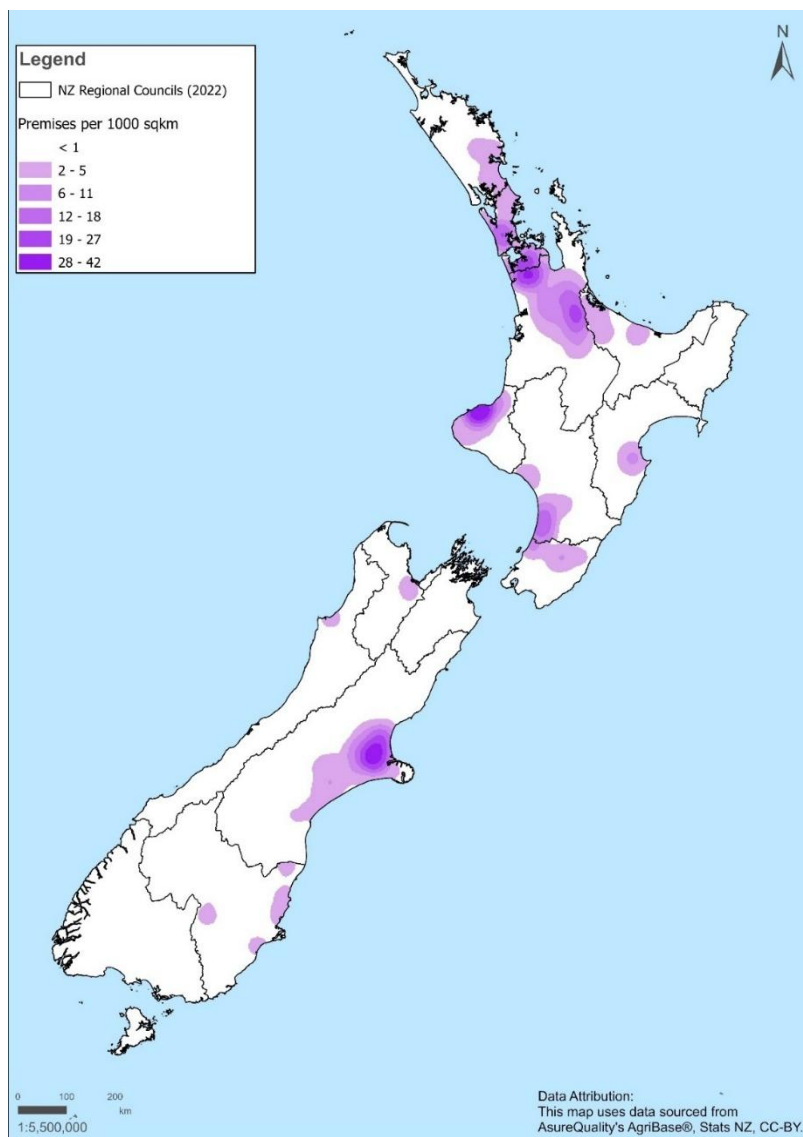


Figure 2. Map showing the distribution of the New Zealand commercial poultry population.

4.2. General surveillance

New Zealand has a well-established [general surveillance system](#) which provides ongoing passive surveillance for HPAI through a notification and investigation system (in accordance with Chapter 1.4. of the *Terrestrial Code*), disease occurrence monitoring, and export testing.

4.2.1. Notification and investigation system

As noted above, there is a legal requirement to report suspected cases of HPAI to MPI. Rapid reporting of suspected exotic or notifiable organisms in domestic animals or wildlife is enabled through an Exotic Pest and Disease hotline, which is operational at all times. MPI receives reports directly from members of the public, including farmers, wildlife rangers, veterinarians, veterinary laboratories and others of suspected HPAI. A team of MPI incursion investigators comprised of veterinary epidemiologists manage investigations to identify or exclude the presence of an exotic disease. Diagnostic testing is performed at AHL or other MPI approved regional commercial veterinary laboratories. Table 1 shows the number of negative investigations of suspected HPAI as the result of notifications to MPI from 2015 to 2024. Over this period, investigations in commercial poultry, wildlife and backyard chickens were completed. The number of investigations for suspected HPAI has increased since 2021, a consequence of increased public awareness of the international spread and impact of HPAI H5N1 Clade 2.3.4.4.b. Descriptions of the investigation of suspected exotic animal diseases are published in New Zealand's [Surveillance](#) magazine.

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
HPAI	5	3	3	6	10	8	14	23	48	92

Table 1: MPI investigations of suspected HPAI from 2015 to 2024, with the exception of the Otago H7N6 outbreak all were negative.

MPI maintains an ongoing engagement programme to enhance animal exotic disease reporting, including HPAI⁴. Examples of content distributed broadly to encourage reporting and early detection can be found on MPI's [website](#).

4.2.2. Disease monitoring

To complement the notification and investigation system, MPI also monitors and analyses trends in disease occurrence that might indicate the presence of an exotic disease. There are three commercial veterinary diagnostic laboratory companies operating across New Zealand. MPI maintains contracts with these laboratories for the provision of a number of services, including (but not limited to), provision of diagnostic information for surveillance, screening of submission forms for key words that could indicate exotic disease, notifying within strict timeframes upon suspicion of an exotic or notifiable organism, and maintenance of minimum operational and technical quality assurance requirements. Audits are regularly conducted by MPI to ensure compliance with contractual requirements.

These laboratories receive samples taken by veterinary practitioners and researchers for routine sick animal disease testing, export testing and health screening tests, and provide MPI with monthly reports on all sick animal cases among production livestock, wildlife and, if associated with a zoonotic disease, companion animals. During 2024 a total of 1,239, and between 1 January – 30 August 2025 a total of 767, sick animal cases and diagnoses involving avian species were received from veterinary laboratories.

Additionally, MPI further monitors wildlife disease occurrence through contracts with New Zealand's five main wildlife hospitals geographically spread across the country and one wildlife rehabilitator⁵. Similar to the veterinary diagnostic laboratories, this wildlife surveillance network provides MPI with diagnostic information on sick animal cases. Collectively, this network saw over 5,306 sick or injured wild bird cases in 2024, and more than 2,100 cases between 1 January and 30 June 2025.

4.2.3. Export testing

Testing for avian influenza viruses pre-export, predominantly within the breeder sector, is undertaken to meet trading partner import certification requirements. Samples positive on screening ELISA are followed by confirmatory PCR to rule out the presence of avian influenza virus. All testing conducted to date has returned negative results for the presence of HPAI. Between 1 January and 31 August 2025, 9,335 ELISA tests and 13,340 PCR tests were completed, representing a bird population of 312,532.

⁴ [Sokolova et al \(2024\) Animal health surveillance and incursion investigation annual report – stakeholder communications. Surveillance 51 \(3\), pp 22-24.](#)

⁵ [Lenting et al \(2025\) Wildlife disease surveillance annual report Surveillance 52\(3\), pp 37-43.](#)

4.3. November–December 2024 outbreak and freedom surveillance

During the initial phase of the response, surveillance was undertaken with the aim of detecting any new cases of HPAI, with a focus on premises with epidemiological links to the IP. Noting the isolation of the infected property and the genomic analysis indicating the origin of the HPAI was from emergence within the infected farm, active surveillance focused on 11 properties (at-risk properties) that were either under common ownership with the farm or were connected through movements of potential disease conveyors.

Surveillance on at-risk properties included active monitoring of daily mortalities and production records, and collection and laboratory testing of up to six freshly dead birds (with in the last 24 hours) collected over every three days for a three-week period (Dead bird pick-up). If there were less than six mortalities all dead birds were tested. For high-risk properties (common ownership with the IP), freedom from infection was further confirmed using a survey of 60 live birds (choanal and cloacal swabs) in each shed at the end of the three-week risk period. The survey was designed to detect avian influenza virus with 95% confidence if it was present at a prevalence of 5% or greater. All 1,566 dead birds tested and 4,280 premise freedom samples returned negative results (Table 2).

Additionally, all properties identified as having backyard chickens within the 10km surveillance zone were visited and given information on biosecurity and how to report disease in their birds. There were no commercial poultry properties within this zone, except for one property that was already under active surveillance due to common ownership with the IP. Opportunistic wildlife sampling within the surveillance zone was also undertaken and resulted in ten wild birds, including three on the infected property, being sampled and tested for HPAI (Table 2).

Enhanced passive surveillance was also maintained nationally. Extensive active communication was undertaken by MPI during this time, both nationally and regionally, and there was significant national media coverage of this event. An awareness raising campaign was also undertaken, encouraging public reports of any sick or dead domestic or wild birds of any species for investigation, with a focus on birds in proximity to the IP. A range of approaches were used, including in-person stakeholder engagement, written material, media interviews, and online content. An [MPI webpage](#) dedicated to the response was initiated. Consequently, there was an increase of notifications to MPI of bird mortality events in both poultry and wildlife. All notifications of sick or dead birds were assessed by MPI veterinarians and investigations undertaken where appropriate. During the month of December, there were 12 investigations in total, seven in domestic poultry and five in wild birds.

From the 22 of December 2024, the surveillance objective changed to proof of freedom. This included the final round of sampling on the at-risk properties outlined above – all tested negative for avian influenza virus, a six-week following period for the IP and post repopulation surveillance. Additionally, ongoing targeted HPAI surveillance (outline in section 4.4.) was in place and national general surveillance is always on-going. Between 1 January 2025 and 30 June 2025, there were 79 avian investigations due to reports of suspect exotic disease (21 in domestic poultry and 58 in wild birds), HPAI was ruled out in all cases. On restocking of the IP, dead bird pick-up (as outlined above) has been implemented in rearing and layer sheds, with an additional round of live bird sampling (n=60) on week 15 for rearing sheds and on day 29 in the layer sheds. All testing has been negative for avian influenza virus.

4.4 Ongoing HPAI surveillance

4.4.1 Surveillance in commercial poultry

General surveillance underpins surveillance for HPAI in all poultry sectors and is built on comprehensive whole flock health plans and specialist veterinary oversight, as well as careful monitoring and reporting of any unusual morbidity or mortality events. Poultry veterinarians are supported by three [MPI recognised](#) poultry pathology laboratories in addition to the commercial veterinary laboratories. As outlined in section 4.2.1. any suspect cases of exotic disease including HPAI are notified to MPI. These cases are followed up by Incursion Investigators working together with MPI's AHL and specialist poultry veterinarians to rule out potential exotic diseases. This is how the 2024 outbreak — the first occurrence of HPAI in New Zealand — was detected. The poultry industry associations disseminate educational material to poultry farmers to increase awareness of clinical signs of HPAI and reporting requirements, as well as information on good biosecurity practices.

Moreover, the New Zealand poultry industry has implemented a structured, risk-based testing programme for avian influenza virus (H5/H7) in commercial poultry to further complement passive surveillance reporting via the MPI exotic pest and disease hotline. This consists of sampling and testing a subset of farms and is designed to enhance early detection in free-range layer chicken and broiler chickens.

4.4.2. Surveillance in wild birds

The Ministry for Primary Industries has undertaken annual surveillance for avian influenza viruses in wild birds since 2004, sampling over 23,000 birds and including at different times migratory shore birds, coastal species and resident waterfowl. For the last 15 years, surveillance has focused on waterfowl, predominantly mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*). Sampling is undertaken in summer, with a particular focus on coastal areas where the birds might have contact with migratory shorebirds. Genetic analyses of the findings of this surveillance suggest that low pathogenic H5 and H7 viruses have circulated in isolation in New Zealand resident waterfowl for some time, with no evidence of recent introductions⁶. In 2024 and 2025, 1,280 and 1,217 birds were sampled respectively.

Initiated in January 2024, and in parallel to the disease monitoring outlined in section 4.2.2, additional sampling of wild birds received by the wildlife surveillance network is undertaken for testing for avian influenza viruses. Sampling is targeted by species, including shorebirds, seabirds, and birds of prey.

No HPAI viruses have been detected in wild birds in New Zealand.

5. Measures implemented to maintain freedom from HPAI

5.1. Farm biosecurity

Commercial poultry premises are required to be registered with MPI under the [Animal Products Act 1999 \(APA\)](#) and must have an MPI approved food safety risk management plan (RMP) which includes biosecurity elements. The RMP are documented programmes prepared by the facility to show how they ensure food safety, including prevention of disease risks, and compliance with MPI standards. They are regularly verified by MPI. To supplement the RMP requirements for layer farms, a national farm biosecurity guidance manual for egg production has been developed by the Egg Producers Federation and MPI and includes information on farm biosecurity to prevent HPAI and other disease risks. MPI provides in-person support to farmers to understand the information provided in the manual.

5.2. Import controls

New Zealand has strict border controls on what can be imported into the country. These controls are provided for under the [Biosecurity Act 1993](#) and include provisions for the development and issuance of import health standards (IHS) and craft risk management standards (CRMS). These standards specify the requirements to be met for the effective management of risks associated with importing risk goods and crafts. The standards are developed from import risk analyses using the WOAHA risk analysis framework.

Imported risk goods, including live animals and animal products, must remain at a port of arrival (border) pending biosecurity clearance. Imported animals are inspected by veterinarians, who are also MPI inspectors. Live birds are not permitted to be imported in New Zealand and avian species can only be imported as hatching eggs.

Clearance of risk goods is authorised by an MPI inspector only if the inspector is satisfied that the goods meet the requirements of the relevant IHS. New Zealand's measures for the import of hatching eggs and avian products are in accordance with the *Terrestrial Code*.

⁶ Stanislawek, W. L. et al (2024). Avian influenza viruses in New Zealand wild birds, with an emphasis on subtypes H5 and H7: Their distinctive epidemiology and genomic properties. *Plos One*, 19(6), e0303756

6. Conclusion

Considering that:

- Infection with HPAI virus is a notifiable disease in New Zealand.
- An on-going HPAI awareness programme is in place to encourage reporting, and application of biosecurity and management measures.
- HPAI had never been detected in New Zealand prior to the outbreak on a single property in November–December 2024.
- A stamping out policy, including cleansing and disinfection, was applied to the infected property.
- Depopulation was completed 11 December 2024 and no HPAI has been detected in New Zealand since that date.
- More than 28 days have elapsed, as prescribed in Article [10.4.6.](#) of the *Terrestrial Code*, since the end of the cleansing and disinfection of the last infected premises.
- Surveillance is being carried out in accordance with articles [10.4.26.](#) to [10.4.30.](#) of the *Terrestrial Code*.
- Commodities are imported into New Zealand in accordance with Articles 10.4.7. to 10.4.22 of the *Terrestrial Code*.

The WOA Delegate of New Zealand declares that the country has met the requirements for freedom from infection with high pathogenicity avian influenza viruses in accordance with the provisions of Article 10.4.6. of the *Terrestrial Code* (edition 2025) and consistent with the information provided to WAHIS.

I, the undersigned, Dr Mary van Andel, Delegate of New Zealand to WOA, take responsibility for the self-declaration of freedom from *HPAI*.

DISCLAIMER

WOAH, after performing an administrative and technical screening of a self-declaration concerning the animal health status of a country, a zone or compartment ("self-declaration"), as described in the standard operating procedures for self-declarations, reserves the right to publish or not the self-declaration on its website. There shall be no right of appeal from this decision or any recourse of any kind.

The publication by WOA of self-declaration on its website does not reflect the official opinion of WOA. Responsibility for the information contained in a self-declaration lies entirely with the Delegate of the Member concerned. Neither WOA nor any person acting on its behalf may be held responsible for the following:

- (i) Any errors, inaccuracies or omissions in the content of a self-declaration,
- (ii) The use which may be made of the information contained in a self-declaration; and
- (iii) Any direct or indirect consequences of any nature arising from or relating to the use of the information contained in a self-declaration.

Drawn up on 12 September 2025

Signature of the Delegate:



Table 1: Details of the infected property in the 2024 HPAI H7N6 outbreak

Species	Number Susceptible	Number cases	Number of Deaths	Number killed and disposed of	Number Vaccinated
Chickens	198,000	13,500	3,500	194,500	0

Table 2: Surveillance testing in poultry until 31 December 2024 on the infected property and at-risk properties.

Property	Property Status	Total number of birds (layer chickens)	Surveillance stream	Samples tested by ELISA	Positive by ELISA	Samples tested by PCR	Positive by PCR
1	Infected property*	198,000	Initial investigation	306	34	112	41
			Delimiting sampling	41	0	1, 317	114
			Dead bird pick-up	0	0	36	20
2	Trace -High Risk Associated ownership	450,000	Dead bird pick-up	0	0	420	0
			Premise disease freedom	0	0	1,760	0
3	Trace -High Risk Associated ownership	63,000	Dead bird pick-up	0	0	232	0
			Premise disease freedom	0	0	840	0
4	Trace -High Risk Associated ownership	94,000	Dead bird pick-up	0	0	180	0
			Premise disease freedom	0	0	480	0
5	Trace -High Risk Associated ownership	96,600	Dead bird pick-up	0	0	238	0
			Premise disease freedom	0	0	600	0
6	Trace -High Risk Associated ownership	32,000	Dead bird pick-up	0	0	52	0
			Premise disease freedom	0	0	600	0
7	Trace -High Risk	12,000	Dead bird pick-up	0	0	236	0
8	Trace-Medium Risk	2,0000	Dead bird pick-up	0	0	40	0
9	Trace-Medium Risk	1,000	Dead bird pick-up	0	0	20	0
10	Trace-Medium Risk	2,500	Dead bird pick-up	0	0	4	0
11	Trace-Medium Risk	4,000	Dead bird pick-up	0	0	224	0
12	Trace-Medium Risk	3,000	Dead bird pick-up	0	0	60	0
Total				347	34	7451	175

*Three wild birds (*Tadorna variegata*) were also opportunistically sampled.