



## What is H5N8?

H5N8 is a strain of avian influenza associated with high mortality in poultry and has been found in many migratory birds.

## How is avian influenza spread?

Avian influenza can infect almost all species of birds. It is primarily spread by direct contact between healthy and infected birds, or through indirect contact with contaminated equipment or other materials. The virus is present in the faeces of infected birds and in discharges from their noses, mouth and eyes.

## Symptoms

Birds with avian influenza normally die very rapidly, and they may die before any clinical signs are visible.



**Signs of infection include:** reduction in normal vocalization; listlessness; swollen runny eyes; drops in egg production sometimes with pale, misshapen or thin-shelled eggs; respiratory signs such as difficulty breathing and foam or blood coming from the nostrils or mouth; neurological signs such as incoordination or abnormal bending of the neck; a drop in feed and/or water consumption; swollen combs and wattles; swollen head and legs; bruising on the unfeathered parts of legs and feet.



## Status (as of 10 Oct 2019, FAO)

**Number of outbreaks to date:**  
192

**Regions affected:**  
Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, Limpopo, Kwazulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, North West, Western Cape

**Most recent outbreaks:**  
Observed on 20 November 2018 in Western Cape (Ostriches)

## H5N8 detections

-  in wild birds
-  in domestic poultry

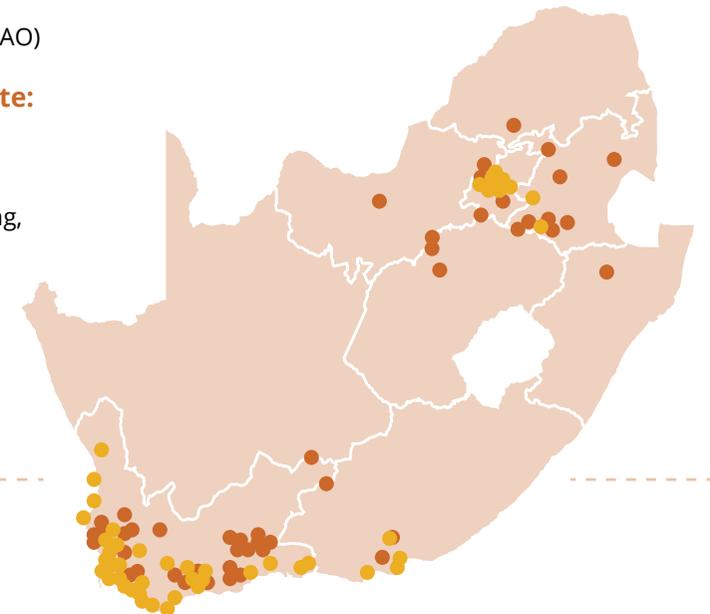


Figure 1: Two main geographical clusters of H5N8 HPAI notifications in South Africa (June 2017 – 31 May 2018)  
South Africa H5N8 HPAI Source: WAHIS, OIE



## Are vaccines available against avian influenza?



Vaccines are available overseas but not currently in South Africa. Current practice in most regions of the world requires the culling of infected birds to control an outbreak.

## Can people be infected?

The current outbreak is the H5N8 highly pathogenic strain. Although it is rapidly fatal in birds, so far, no human cases have occurred.



Precautions still need to be taken. People are advised not to handle dead bird carcasses without gloves and to disinfect hands after handling carcasses.



## What should I do when I find sick or dead birds?

All sick or dead birds (both wild birds and poultry) should be reported to local veterinary services.

## Preventative measures

- Keep poultry and other birds away from wild birds and their body fluids, through keeping them indoors, or using screens, fencing or nets.
- Access to your property should be restricted as far as possible.
- Vehicles should be disinfected upon entering and exiting your property.
- Do not allow any people who have had contact with poultry in the last 48 hours onto your property.
- Use footbaths upon entry and exit to the poultry house.
- Remove items that attract wild birds such as mortalities or spilled feed.
- Preferably do not handle other birds and disinfect your hands or any in-contact clothing afterwards.



## Impact on the poultry industry (BFAP, Feb 2018)

Total cull numbers from broiler and layer industries are estimated at around 5.4 million birds (4.7 million birds culled in the laying sector and 700 000 birds culled in the broiler sector).

Total biological loss amounts to approximately R 317 million rand. 75% accrues to the commercial laying industry and its various stages of production.

Direct costs associated with the outbreak was around R40.5 million.

Income foregone the total value is estimated at just over R1.5 billion rand, which includes income lost from egg sales, pullet sales, day old chick sales and broiler meat sales.

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