

Preventing the Introduction of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza to Fiji

The Biosecurity Authority of Fiji (BAF) is committed to safeguarding the country's unique biodiversity and public health. In light of the global threat posed by Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), BAF urges all stakeholders, travelers, and the public to comply with strict biosecurity measures to prevent its introduction into Fiji.

What is Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI)?

HPAI is a severe viral disease affecting poultry and wild birds, with the potential to devastate local bird populations and pose risks to human health. The virus can spread through contaminated birds, eggs, feathers, feed, and equipment.

New Zealand Situation

BAF counterpart in New Zealand, New Zealand Ministry of Primary Industries (NZMPI) officially confirmed that NZ reported their first case of high pathogenicity strain avian influenza, H7N6, in chickens on a commercial free-range egg farm in a remote part of rural Otago. This is not the HPAI H5N1 strain that has caused deaths in poultry, wild birds, and mammals overseas. New Zealand remains free of HPAI H5N1.

The H7N6 strain is closely related to low pathogenic strains of avian influenza present in wild birds in New Zealand. When an LPAI strain is introduced to chickens, it can mutate into a high pathogenic strain. Testing shows the strain is unrelated to the H7 strain of avian influenza identified in Australia earlier this year.

Preventative Measures to prevent the entry of Avian Influenza to Fiji:

1. Import Restrictions:

- a. No live poultry, birds, or unprocessed bird products (e.g., eggs, meat, or feathers) may be imported into Fiji without prior approval from BAF.
- b. Imports must comply with strict biosecurity standards and be accompanied by valid health certificates.

2. Travelers:

- a. Declare all poultry-related items, including clothing, footwear, or equipment exposed to birds.
- b. Disinfect footwear and equipment before entering Fiji.
- c. Avoid contact with birds or poultry in countries affected by HPAI before traveling to Fiji.

With Immediate effect all unprocessed poultry products such frozen or cured poultry meat, fresh or cured poultry eggs are prohibited to import to Fiji with the personal allowances. Processed poultry products such as sausages, cooked chicken meat or patties or any products that are not shelf stable are prohibited for import to Fiji with the personal allowance. Processed, retorted products which are shelf stable and having poultry as an ingredient will only be allowed to be imported to Fiji under personal allowances

3. Local Poultry Farmers:

- a. Enhance biosecurity on farms by limiting access to visitors and preventing contact between domestic and wild birds.
- b. Report any sudden illness or unusual deaths in poultry to BAF immediately.

Surveillance

BAF conducts regular monitoring of wild and domestic bird populations to detect early signs of HPAI. Cooperation from the public is essential.

Penalties for Non-Compliance

Failure to adhere to biosecurity regulations can result in fines, confiscation of items, or other legal actions under the Biosecurity Act 2008.

The introduction of HPAI would have devastating consequences for Fiji's agriculture, economy, and public health. Let us work together to ensure Fiji remains free from this deadly disease.

For more information or to report concerns, contact the Biosecurity Authority of Fiji Animal Permit team via animalimports@baf.com.fj or info@baf.com.fj.