

2025 HPAI Guidelines: Risk assessment at the point of admission

Initial Wildlife Assessment in the Context of HPAI

Before accepting a new wildlife patient, it is essential to conduct a **risk assessment based on information provided by the finder or collector**. This initial screening helps determine whether the animal may pose a risk of introducing Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) into your facility or local environment.

The assessment should consider:

- **Species** – Is the animal a known carrier or susceptible species (e.g., seabird)?
- **Location found** – Was it found in or near a known outbreak area or a high-risk zone such as wetlands or bird colonies?
- **Clinical signs** – Are there signs consistent with HPAI, such as neurological symptoms, sudden death, respiratory distress, or excessive discharge?
- **Recent wildlife mortality in the area** – Has the finder observed other dead or sick birds nearby?

This information should be gathered **before the animal is physically handled or brought to the facility**, enabling a proactive decision on whether to:

- Proceed with intake under strict quarantine and PPE protocols
- Refer the finder to local authorities or biosecurity officers
- Decline intake due to high risk and advise on safe disposal or reporting procedures

By embedding risk assessment into the first point of contact, rehabilitators can make informed decisions that protect themselves, their patients, and the broader ecosystem.

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Wildlife Intake HPAI Risk Screening Form

(To be completed before physical contact with the animal)

1. Finder Details

- **Name:** _____
- **Phone/Email:** _____
- **Date & Time of Call/Contact:** _____

2. Animal Information

- **Species (if known):** _____
- **Number of animals:** _____
- **Age/Class (adult, juvenile, chick):** _____
- **Condition when found (alive/dead):** _____

3. Location of Animal

- **Exact location found (GPS if possible):** _____
- **Proximity to wetlands, seabird colonies, or poultry farms:**
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure
- **Are there other sick or dead birds observed in the area?**
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure
If yes, how many? _____ Species (if known): _____

4. Clinical Signs Checklist

Indicate any symptoms observed or reported by the finder:

Neurological Signs

- ☐ Inability to stand or fly
- ☐ Twisted neck or abnormal posture
- ☐ Incoordination or tremors
- ☐ Circling behaviour or swimming in circles
- ☐ Seizures or spasms

Respiratory Signs

- ☐ Difficulty breathing or gaping (open-mouth breathing)

WReNNZ HPAI Guidelines for Rehabilitators

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- ☐ Sneezing, coughing, or nasal discharge/snicking
- ☐ Gurgling, rattling or abnormal respiratory sounds

Gastrointestinal/Other

- ☐ Swelling of head, neck or around eyes
 - ☐ Cloudy or discoloured eyes
 - ☐ Lethargy, unresponsiveness, drooping wings
 - ☐ Unusual tameness or landing in inappropriate places
 - ☐ Sudden death (or found dead with no obvious trauma)
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5. Risk Assessment Summary

- ☐ No signs of HPAI, no risk indicators → Proceed with standard intake
- ☐ Some signs and/or risk factors present → Quarantine with full PPE & notify MPI
- ☐ High suspicion of HPAI → Do not admit. Report to MPI and await further instructions

Notes: _____

Form completed by: _____

Date: _____