

Name of Policy	Zoonotic Diseases (Avian Influenza etc) Policy - Interim	
Description of Policy		
<input type="checkbox"/> New Policy	<input type="checkbox"/> Revision	
Description of Revision	<i>Delete</i> <i>Please type brief description of the deletion and specify information to be deleted</i>	
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Human Resources Directorate

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1. Background Information

Avian Influenza (AI – also known as Bird Flu) is a zoonotic disease (i.e. a disease of animals which can be transmitted to humans). AI is a contagious viral infection of birds. AI viruses can spread through droppings, saliva or contaminated food (where food has not been prepared in accordance with relevant standards).

Humans are generally not affected by AI but some strains of the virus can affect humans who come into very close contact with infected birds. Most recent cases of AI in humans have been caused by wild birds affecting domestic poultry. In recent months more than 70 people have died in South East Asia due to the H5N1 strain of the virus.

2. Risk

The major concern relating to AI is that some of the more virulent strains have the potential to mutate and perhaps develop the ability to pass from human to human. The World Health Organisation (WHO) assesses the risk that AI poses through a Staging Criteria;

1. Animal Infections with Low Risk to Humans
2. Animal Infections with HPI – Not Easily contained
3. Animal to Human Infection – Contained
4. Human to Human Infection in small clusters
5. Human to Human Infection in large clusters
6. Pandemic

The WHO currently rates AI as being at stage 3. This stage is considered by the WHO to be low risk.

Australia does not import live chickens or any raw chicken products, nor does it permit the importation of cooked, retorted eggs as well as a number of other products containing egg. It is not possible for a person to become infected with the avian influenza from appropriately cooked food.

3. Affected Regions

The majority of discovered cases of AI (in both humans and birds) have been mainly contained to countries in South East Asia, including:

- Indonesia
- Vietnam
- Cambodia
- China
- Thailand

However, given the nature of migratory birds, cases of infections in birds have also been reported in:

- Germany
- South Africa
- Japan
- Pakistan
- Nigeria
- Turkey

It is likely that other countries may identify cases of infections in birds and, possibly, humans. It is important that, prior to travelling on University business or on holiday, all staff take steps to inform themselves of the risks associated with their travel. See further information.

4. Advice for Travellers

Staff travelling to affected regions should avoid close contact with chickens, turkeys, ducks and other birds, handle all uncooked chicken meat and eggs hygienically and properly cook poultry in order to destroy the virus - influenza viruses are killed at approximately 70°C. The Department of Health and Ageing has compiled a list of [frequently asked questions regarding avian influenza](#), including prevention and control measures to take if travelling to affected regions.

Whilst the avian influenza virus does not spread easily from birds to people, the [Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade](#) advises travellers (especially children) to areas that report outbreaks of avian influenza to avoid contact with farms and live bird markets. A [list of countries with recent infections in animals](#) is maintained by the Australian Department of Health and Ageing.

To prevent the possible introduction of the avian influenza virus into Australia, the [Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service](#) is currently screening all flights, passengers and baggage from high-risk countries (including Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam, Thailand, China, Laos, Cambodia, Pakistan and Indonesia), as well as all incoming international mail, for poultry products.

5. Symptoms

The symptoms of AI are similar to that of other forms of influenza, including fever, sore throat, cough, headache, muscle aches and pains.

Many people suffer from respiratory infections and the probability that, if a person begins suffering the above symptoms, they have 'bird flu' is extremely low. If, however, a person has just returned from countries with known cases of AI (such as South East Asian nations) and she/he is experiencing any of the symptoms outlined above, she/he should seek immediate medical advice advising her/his doctor of the recent travel and activities, including any visits to farms or markets in Asia.

6. Planning

6.1 Level 1

In the event that the Avian Influenza reaches stage 4 (that is Human to Human Infection in Small Clusters), the University will begin to implement the following:

In Australia,

- closely monitor Commonwealth and State Department of Health directives and advice;
- refer staff and students to the relevant health agencies or their personal general practitioner in relation to the provision of the Tamiflu or other relevant treatment;
- in consultation with relevant health authorities, close campus/es if the outbreak cluster is located in the vicinity of a particular campus;
- ensure that staff and students are informed of the situation;
- on the advice of relevant health authorities, cease all sales of poultry products in University food outlets; and,

- monitor staff who have contracted the disease and who have recovered and or are immune to the Virus. Staff in this category may be deployed to roles outside of their normal employment in order to support continuation of business operations.

Internationally,

- closely monitor Commonwealth and State Department of Health directives and advice;
- cancel all travel by ACU staff, on University business, to affected regions as informed by Commonwealth Health and/or Foreign Affairs advice;
- any staff member in an affected region and **who does not have any symptoms**, shall, on return to Australia, be required to remain on leave with full pay for no less than 14 days after which she/he shall be required to visit a doctor to obtain clearance to return to duty;
- students in or from affected areas overseas must not return to the University until such time as the outbreak cluster is contained as advised by the relevant government or international authority. No penalty shall be administered to a student in relation to their studies; and,
- refer staff and students to the relevant health agencies or their personal general practitioner in relation to the provision of the Tamiflu or other relevant treatment.

6.2 Level 2

In the event that the Avian Influenza reaches stage 5 (Human to Human Infections in Large Clusters), the University shall, in addition to the preceding Level 1 requirements, take the following actions:

In Australia,

- direct persons who have symptoms to leave the work/learning place and not return until they have been cleared by a doctor or relevant health authority; and,
- close campuses if the cluster is located in the vicinity of the campus.

Internationally,

- staff members shall be advised, where possible, to contact the Australian Embassy or Consulate to inform them of their location and status;
- staff members shall be requested, where possible, to contact the University in order to inform the University of their status. This shall be done via email (safety@acu.edu.au) or telephone (61 2 9739 2368) or, if needed, any other convenient means;
- returning staff members shall be directed to visit a local doctor immediately if any symptoms of the Influenza are experienced;
- any staff member in an affected region and **who does not have any symptoms** shall where possible immediately return to Australia and remain on leave with full pay for a period of not less than 14 days; and,
- returning students shall not be permitted to attend University until such time as the outbreak has been contained.

6.3 Level 3

In the event that the Avian Influenza reaches stage 6 (Pandemic), the University shall, as required by the Commonwealth and State:

- in consultation with local health agencies, close all campuses; and,
- staff the Vice-Chancellery building only with no less than 4 uninfected staff members who are to monitor any communication with the University.

7. Further Information

Further Information on Avian Influenza can be obtained from the following authorities:

World Health Organisation

http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/en/index.html

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade – Smart Traveller (traveller advisories)

<http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/>

[http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/TravelBulletins/Health : Avian Influenza](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/TravelBulletins/Health:_Avian_Influenza)

Department of Health and Ageing

http://www.health.gov.au/internet/wcms/publishing.nsf/Content/health-avian_influenza-index.htm

Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service

<http://www.daff.gov.au/content/output.cfm?ObjectID=8085907C-0EB3-45A1-8092ADE235069471>

8. Policy Review

The University may make changes to this policy and procedures from time to time to improve the effectiveness of its operation. In this regard, any staff member who wishes to make any comments about this policy may forward their suggestions to the Director, Human Resources

9. Further Assistance

Staff wishing to obtain further information on this policy and procedures should first seek clarification from their supervisor who is responsible for the implementation and operation of the arrangements in their work area. Should further information be required, questions should then be directed to the Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Coordinator.