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Government of India
Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying
Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying
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Date: 18th February, 2026

Dear Colleagues,

Subject: Advisory on Detection and Response to HPAI in Crows and Other Non-Poultry Species.

I would like to draw your kind attention to the recent detection of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI -H5N1) in wild birds, including crows, and other non-poultry species in certain parts of the country like Kerala, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, Sikkim and Maharashtra

In view of the above, this Department has prepared an **Advisory on Detection and Response to HPAI in Crows and Other Non-Poultry Species** (copy enclosed) aligned with the *Action Plan for Prevention, Control and Containment of Avian Influenza (Revised 2021)*.

The Advisory, inter alia, provides comprehensive guidance on identification and investigation of unusual mortality events in crows and other non-poultry species, immediate reporting, and clear reiteration of the no-culling policy where infection is confined to non-poultry species. It further outlines biosafety and biosecurity measures for field personnel, including proper sample collection and referral to designated laboratories, mandates surveillance, emphasizes scientific disposal of carcasses and strengthened biosecurity in nearby poultry establishments, and underscores the need for coordinated intersectoral action under the One Health framework.

The objective of this Advisory is to ensure a uniform, evidence-based, and proportionate response across States/UTs, prevent unnecessary public panic, and facilitate early detection and effective containment.

I would request you to kindly disseminate the Advisory to all concerned field functionaries and other relevant authorities, for compliance and necessary action.

Regards,

Yours sincerely,

Naveena 18/2/26

(Naveena B. Maheswarappa)

To,

**Additional Chief Secretary/ Principal Secretary/ Secretary, Animal Husbandry
All States/UTs**

Copy to:

Commissioner/ Director, Animal Husbandry all States /UTs

ADVISORY ON DETECTION AND RESPONSE TO HIGHLY PATHOGENIC AVIAN INFLUENZA (HPAI) IN CROWS AND OTHER NON-POULTRY SPECIES

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), particularly H5 and H7 subtype viruses, continue to pose a serious threat to animal health, livelihoods and biosecurity. While domestic poultry are highly susceptible, infections and mortality have also been reported in wild birds such as crows and other non-poultry species like pigeons, heron, peacocks, owl etc. Detection of HPAI in these species serves as an early warning signal for virus circulation in the environment and potential risk to poultry populations.

This advisory is developed to guide State/UT Animal Husbandry Departments, field veterinarians, wildlife authorities and local administration on early detection, reporting and response to suspected cases of HPAI in crows and other non-poultry species, with the objective of preventing spillover to domestic poultry and reducing public health risk.

HPAI may be suspected in:

- Crows and other wild birds found dead or moribund
- Raptors and scavenging birds
- Other non-poultry birds found dead in proximity to avian mortality events

Suspicion of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza: The following events should be treated as suspect:

- Sudden or unexplained death of one or more crows or wild birds
- Cluster mortality in a localized area
- Birds showing neurological signs such as tremors, loss of balance or paralysis
- Respiratory distress, lethargy or inability to fly
- Carcasses found near poultry farms, water bodies or human habitations

Immediate Actions on Detection of HPAI

a) **Reporting:** All suspected cases must be reported immediately to the nearest veterinary dispensary/ hospital or Wildlife authorities where applicable. Reporting mechanisms through animal husbandry field staff, forest/wildlife staff and community informants should be activated for early detection of unusual morbidity or mortality events in domestic poultry, wild birds.

b) **No Culling Policy:** In the event of detection of Avian Influenza in crows, wild birds, or any other non-poultry species, culling of domesticated poultry, wild birds or non-poultry species shall not be undertaken. The occurrence of cases in such species does not warrant stamping out operations in domestic poultry populations.

b) **Disinfection and Safety**

- The local municipal authorities to be alerted to enhance biosecurity and carry out thorough disinfection in the entire area where bird mortality has been reported.
- Field staff shall not handle the sick or dead birds with bare hands and must use personal protective equipment including gloves, masks, boots and protective clothing and wash their hands thoroughly. immediately after handling such birds
- The veterinary staff should not undertake any post-mortem examination on the dead birds and shall refer maximum of three dead/sacrificed severely diseased birds to the nearest designated Regional Disease Diagnostic Laboratory following proper bio-safety and zoo-sanitary measures. The carcasses of the remaining dead birds may be disposed-off as outlined below.
- Footwear, equipment and vehicles must be disinfected after visiting affected sites

c) Surveillance: Extensive field surveillance to be carried out in 10 Km radius of the foci of bird collection in accordance with the guidelines laid out in the Action Plan for Prevention, Control and Containment of Avian Influenza (Revised 2021) to detect any mortality in crows and other wild birds, and for unusual mortality in poultry birds. Sample collection shall only be undertaken by trained personnel following prescribed biosafety protocols. Samples should be transported under cold chain to authorized laboratories for confirmation by RT-PCR. Effective implementation of active surveillance ensuring the collection of samples from wet bird markets, poultry farms including backyard and hatcheries, etc.

d) Disposal of Carcasses and Poultry Waste disposal: Carcasses/ dead birds should be disposed of by deep burial or incineration as per Action Plan for Prevention, Control and Containment of Avian Influenza (Revised 2021) . precautions to avoid contamination of water bodies and surrounding areas during carcass handling and disposal

A robust and scientifically designed mechanism for the management of by-products and disposal of solid and liquid waste generated from municipal slaughterhouses and retail meat shops (butcher shops) to be established across States/UTs. Proper collection systems for poultry processing waste should be instituted at the municipal level, with safe disposal through approved rendering processes, composting methods, in accordance with regulatory standards. The spillage and disposal in the open should be avoided so as not to attract the wild birds.

e) Communication and Awareness

- Extensive education campaign to be undertaken to inform all concerned including general public on the perceived threat of bird flu and of the steps to be taken to prevent its spread
- Local communities should be advised not to touch dead birds and to report sightings to Animal Husbandry Department. Dairy, poultry and livestock farmers should be informed about increased biosecurity measures during alert periods.

- Clear and accurate public communication may be ensured through coordinated messaging to avoid misinformation or unnecessary panic, while providing practical guidance to communities on reporting bird mortality and adopting safe practices.

f) Biosecurity for Poultry Farms

- Poultry farms in general and especially those located within the surveillance zone shall be advised to follow strict biosecurity guidelines including restricted movement of people and preventing the entry of stray animals into the premises. In case of poultry farms located close to the wild bird habitat such as wetlands, water and feed sources need to be protected from wild birds.
- Frequent movement of farm workers between the various poultry farms should be avoided.
- Poultry farm owners may be advised to strictly regulate the entry of outside vehicles into farm premises. Wherever entry is unavoidable, vehicles must undergo proper cleaning and disinfection at designated points before access is permitted and during exit from the farm premises.
- Proper sanitary measures including application of foot bath at the entry of the Farms, washing of utensils and equipment after use at the farms and washing of hands before and after various poultry related works should be made a routine.

g) Intersectoral Coordination under One Health:

- One Health approach be operationalized through close coordination among Animal Husbandry, Human Health, Forest, and Wildlife Departments to address the issue in a comprehensive and integrated manner.
- The Forest and Wildlife Departments may be formally alerted to undertake enhanced surveillance and monitoring in wild birds, particularly in wetlands, migratory bird habitats, peri-urban areas, and human–animal–ecosystem interface zones to ensure early detection and timely response.
- Timely information sharing between veterinary and public health authorities must be ensured to assess zoonotic risk and initiate appropriate preventive measures.