

## Funding is vital for advancement

THE world of commerce relies on money, and funding is the energy that makes projects possible and advances world industry.

Fire, flood, drought and rodents in plague proportions impact farming and increase the cost of biosecurity materials needed in disease responses and planning.

Without budgeted amounts in agribusiness plans, this can lead to reduced returns.

The result of reduced returns and increasing costs is one tackled by ourselves, your advocacy body, farmers, those in the supply chain and the government.

Egg Farmers of Australia's funds are generated by voluntary donations from farmers and corporate sponsors while government funds are generated through taxes. It is our responsibility to be the risk takers and provide new funding models and systems for industry advancement.

Working together so that we are not re-inventing the wheel is important to save money.

Our board has had to discuss issues relating to repayment of the response measures that the government has underwritten, so it would be beneficial to proactively look at funds at the same time and consider the tools available to farmers for updating and incorporating new strategies into their day-to-day.

There is no silver bullet for these issues - be it insurance, the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement, biosecurity controls, staff training or sup-



**Egg Farmers of Australia**

by MELINDA HASHIMOTO  
CEO



porting representative bodies, but considering a combination of these elements can assist farmers to structure and reduce risk.

As CEO, my focus is on bringing together these elements for the board to make more informed policy decisions on improvement.

Change may seem incremental at times, yet over many months, decisions lead to a new way of thinking and responding.

Egg Farmers of Australia are pleased that we have been able to offer our members the opportunity for webinars

on topics pertaining to both personal and business insurance, policy and biosecurity awareness programs and risk mitigation.

Even with the impacts that farmers and our organisation have felt throughout the avian influenza outbreak, we have continued to advocate and provide benefits and support to our members.

Should you wish to become a member of EFA, please visit our website at [www.eggfarmersaustralia.org](http://www.eggfarmersaustralia.org)

We look forward to welcoming you into our flock! 🐔



Egg Farmers of Australia CEO, Melinda Hashimoto and Organisation Coordinator, Kylie Jackson at the 2024 Biosecurity Symposium.



National Avian Influenza Summit was well attended.

## PoultryHub Australia out and about

IN late August I attended the National Avian Influenza Summit organised by the Australian Chicken Meat Foundation.

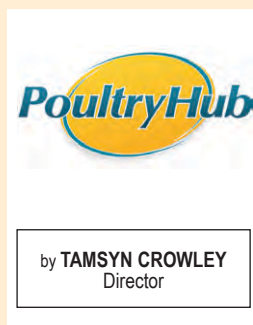
This event gathered industry leaders, biosecurity experts and government officials to address the critical issue of avian influenza in Australia.

The summit, held both in person and online, enabled wide participation and fostered meaningful discussions on how to combat this threat.

The summit began with presentations from key speakers, including Dr Mary Wu from ACMF, Mr Rowan McMonnies from Australian Eggs and Dr Beth Cookson, Australia's Chief Veterinary Officer.

They provided updates on recent avian influenza outbreaks in Victoria and NSW, stressing the ongoing risks and the need for heightened surveillance and preparedness.

These insights set the tone for the summit,



emphasising the importance of a proactive and coordinated approach.

The first session, "Likely Pathways for Incursions and Surveillance," focused on the wild bird surveillance system for H5N1, presented by Paul Eden from Wildlife Health Australia.

He outlined how wild birds can be vectors for the virus, making surveillance critical to biosecurity.

This was followed by a discussion featuring Dr Sam Allan, Dr Tiggy Grillo, Dr Andrew Walsh and Dr Beth Cookson, who debated whether Australia's current surveillance systems are fit for

purpose and identified challenges in making them more adaptable.

The second session, "Preparing for 'The Big One,'" delved into risk mapping and food security, particularly in free-range farming.

Facilitated by Dr Alex-Kate Langfield, Melinda Hashimoto, Dr Sheridan Alfirevich and Dr Mary Wu, the session explored the elevated risks in free-range poultry production and how better preparedness can mitigate these risks.

A notable session on communication protocols and biosecurity enhancements was led by Amanda Olthof from AgriFutures Australia,

Dr Andrew Walsh and Dr Peter Scott.

This practical discussion emphasised the need for effective communication during outbreaks, along with strengthening biosecurity measures on farms.

A key part of the summit focused on national contingency planning, led by Byron Stein from NSW's Department of Primary Industries and Dr Brant Smith from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

Participants explored various outbreak scenarios, highlighting the need for a coordinated national response and efficient funding mechanisms to support affected businesses and recovery efforts.

The second day of the summit continued with practical biosecurity strategies, focusing on on-farm biosecurity and response preparedness.

Dr Mark Cozens from Animal Health Australia discussed

continued P2



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## Poultry Industry Calendar of Events

### 2024

**OCT 16-17** – National Chicken Council Annual Conference 2024, Washington, USA. [www.nationalchickencouncil.org/](http://www.nationalchickencouncil.org/)

**OCT 16-17** – Dutch Pork and Poultry Expo, Evenementenhal Hardenberg Netherlands. [www.porkpoultryexpo.nl/](http://www.porkpoultryexpo.nl/)

**OCT 22-23** – Poultry Hub Australia's Ideas Exchange 2024, Brisbane, Queensland. [www.poultryhub.org/ie2024](http://www.poultryhub.org/ie2024)

**OCT 28-29** – International Conference on Poultry Science, Lisbon Portugal. [waset.org/poultry-science-conference-in-october-2024-in-lisbon](http://waset.org/poultry-science-conference-in-october-2024-in-lisbon)

**NOV 12-15** – 28th Latin American Poultry Congress, Punta del Este Uruguay. [ovum2024.uy/en/ovum2024-english/#pll\\_switcher](http://ovum2024.uy/en/ovum2024-english/#pll_switcher)

**NOV 12-15** – EuroTier 2024, Hanover Germany. [www.eurotier.com](http://www.eurotier.com)

### 2025

**JAN 28-30** – IPPE 2025, Atlanta Georgia, USA. [www.ippexpo.org](http://www.ippexpo.org)

**FEB 10-12** – Australian Poultry Science Symposium, Sydney, Australia. [www.apss2025.com.au](http://www.apss2025.com.au)

**FEB 18-19** – Australasian Veterinary Poultry Association Scientific Meeting, Wagga Wagga, NSW. [www.avpa.asn.au/events](http://www.avpa.asn.au/events)

**MAR 5** – 2025 NSW Poultry Industry Golf Day, Lakeside Golf Club Camden, NSW. Email: [david.sherwood@ewnutrition.com](mailto:david.sherwood@ewnutrition.com)

**JUN 23-26** – 24th European Symposium on Poultry Nutrition, Maastricht, Netherlands. [www.espn2025.eu](http://www.espn2025.eu)

#### How to supply event details:

Send all details to National Poultry Newspaper, PO Box 162, Wynnum Qld 4178, call 07 3286 1833 or email [ads@collins.media](mailto:ads@collins.media)

[poultrynews.com.au](http://poultrynews.com.au)

**07 3286 1833**



Panel discussion on risk mapping including Melinda Hashimoto, CEO, Egg Farmers of Australia, Dr Sheridan Alfrevich, General Manager - Farming, Inghams Group Limited, Dr Alex-Kate Langfield, Director and Head Veterinarian, Hatch House and Dr Mary Wu, ACMF CEO.



Chicken Meat Federation CEO, Dr Mary Wu, and AI Summit Facilitator, Jackie Poyser.

## ACMF hosts national avian influenza summit

THE Australian Chicken Meat Federation recently hosted a National Avian Influenza Summit, bringing together various stakeholders from the egg and poultry meat supply chain to discuss issues related to H5N1 and our national preparedness.

The summit was open to researchers, government officials, integrated producers and growers to garner a range of perspectives on issues related to H5N1.

Held across two days on the Gold Coast, with over 200 participants attending physically and online, the summit hosted informative panel

discussions led by industry experts and government representatives.

The speakers and panellists focused on issues related to communication, surveillance, national contingency planning and biosecurity.

Throughout day one of the summit, valuable insights were shared from both government and industry participants.

Dr Seiche Genger from Baiada Poultry and Oscar Garrison from United Egg Producers discussed 'lessons-learned' from previous US outbreaks and their applicability to Australia's context.

The importance of nationally pre-agreed

upon biosecurity procedures for destruction, disposal and decontamination were discussed in-depth along with the need to develop contingency plans in the event of widespread H5N1 outbreaks.

Despite diverse perspectives from the audience, there was a mutual recognition that a range of response options remain essential in the face of a potential H5N1 outbreak, given the virus' pathogenicity and high mortality rate.

The summit's second day allowed industry stakeholders to engage in open discussions and interactive workshops about on-farm biosecu-

rity challenges and the resources needed for enhanced preparedness and response capabilities.

Through these interactive workshops, our diverse group of industry representatives came together to brainstorm, resulting in actionable solutions to strengthen readiness.

What was evident was the need for greater transparency surrounding communication channels between government and the broader industry to facilitate timely communication and intelligence sharing.

The ACMF remains positive that this summit will lead to proactive actions by both state and federal governments to further facilitate Australia's preparedness.

Industry has long been vocal about our collective needs and concerns surrounding Australia's current capacity to respond to a large-scale outbreak like those seen internationally.

Importantly, governments and industry must consider the ramifications upon Australia's food security, the broader economy, con-

servation of native species (birds and mammals), other livestock sectors and our health if an outbreak was not contained in a timely manner.

The summit was also an opportunity for stakeholders to reflect on their own stake in biosecurity and the need to continuously improve readiness and biosecurity response capabilities.

Post summit, ACMF will be completing a series of actions based on discussions and recommendations in collaboration with governments to facilitate better preparedness.

We'd like to thank participants for their high level of engagement and for sharing their invaluable perspectives to support our collective capability in responding to the challenges faced by HPAI.

Again, the ACMF would like to thank our sponsors for their ongoing support in facilitating this event - Animal Health Australia, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Australian Eggs, Egg Farmers of Australia, Elanco and AgriFutures. 🐔

**ACMF**

## PoultryHub Australia out and about

from P1 best practices to prevent disease spread and ensure preparedness at the farm level.

This was followed by a session on movement control during an outbreak, exploring the Ausvet plan and offering advice on managing logistical challenges effectively.

The summit highlighted Australia's progress in combating avian influenza but also emphasised the need for continuous improvement in surveillance, preparedness, and communication.

The collaborative discussions and practical solutions generated during the event will be instrumental in shaping the future of biosecurity in the poultry industry, ensuring the sector is better prepared to face future outbreaks.

We are also thrilled to announce new funding opportunities that will be announced at our annual conference this year, Ideas Exchange, which will take place in Brisbane

from October 22-23. Don't forget to register for this exciting event!

At Poultry Hub Australia, we're all about pushing the poultry industry forward through research, education, and working together.

We're here to support sustainable practices, improve animal welfare and help grow the next generation of industry professionals.

We're always looking to get better at what we do, so if you have any thoughts or ideas, we'd love to hear them.

Whether you're a farmer, researcher, student or just interested in the industry, your feedback helps us make a bigger impact. Feel free to reach out with any suggestions!

Visit [poultryhub.org](http://poultryhub.org) for more information.



Mary Wu presenting at the National Avian Influenza Summit.



Paul Eden, Senior Project Officer - Surveillance, Wildlife Health Australia, Melinda Hashimoto, CEO, Egg Farmers of Australia, Verity Price, Deputy CEO, ACMF and Dr Tiggy Grillo, National Coordinator/Chief Operating Officer, Wildlife Health Australia.

**NATIONAL Poultry**  
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# ZorbiFresh Active - a key to healthier poultry

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ZorbiFresh Active is highly effective against harmful bacteria, including *Staphylococcus aureus* and *E. coli*.

Upon application, the product begins killing bacteria, pathogens, fungi, viruses and fly larvae, providing constant antibacterial action which significantly improves hygiene and lowers the risk of infections.

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### Moisture control for better health

ZorbiFresh Active has an exceptional moisture absorption capacity, playing a crucial role in keeping bedding dry.



Excess moisture in bedding can lead to skin infections, respiratory problems and poor foot health.

By maintaining drier conditions, ZorbiFresh Active helps prevent these moisture-related health challenges, ensuring that birds are kept in optimal health throughout their growth cycle.

### Ammonia reduction for cleaner air

Air quality in intensive housing is directly affected by increased ammonia levels, due to waste.

ZorbiFresh Active contains a unique combination of natural zeolite and oxone, which together absorb ammonia and nitrates.

By preventing ammonia from converting into ammonium, fresher, cleaner air is maintained, health issues reduced and a healthier working environment for staff is provided.

### Enhanced animal welfare and farm productivity

The combined effects

of moisture control, ammonia reduction and bacterial management result in a healthier, more comfortable living environment for poultry.

This translates to several benefits for farm operations.

Healthier birds are less stressed, suffer fewer health problems, veterinary costs will be reduced and feed efficiency will improve.

### Odour and fly management

ZorbiFresh Active has the ability to neutralise unpleasant odours.

Its moisture-absorbing properties combined with ammonia control help minimise strong smells, improving the comfort of farm workers and helping farms meet environmental regulations.

ZorbiFresh Active also plays a role in managing flies.

By creating a drier, low-ammonia environment, the product reduces fly populations.

For even more effective fly management,

ZorbiFresh Active Plus offers enhanced features to tackle this issue.

### Ease of use and labour efficiency

ZorbiFresh Active is easy to apply, making it a labour-efficient solution for farms.

For all types of bedding material, the product integrates seamlessly.

The recommended application rate is 50g to 100g per square metre every week for disease prevention, depending on the moisture level and condition of the housing.

Higher usage rates apply for disease mitigation.

ZorbiFresh Active is a comprehensive bedding solution that improves both bird welfare and farm efficiency by addressing moisture control, ammonia reduction, bacterial control, odour and fly management.

For farmers looking to boost productivity, reduce veterinary costs, and ensure healthier animals, ZorbiFresh Active and ZorbiFresh Active Plus offer a smart, effective solution that's harmless to both birds and humans.

For more information, contact [paul.buffey@bpmnz.co.nz](mailto:paul.buffey@bpmnz.co.nz)

# New Woolworths deal impacts Inghams poultry supply

A NEW supplier agreement will see Inghams sell less poultry to Woolworths by up to 3 percent during 2024-25, while remaining the supermarket's primary poultry provider.

Managing director Andrew Reeves assured stakeholders that this change was a manageable "one-time step-down."

He emphasised that Inghams was still poised for growth alongside Woolworths as they expand their business.

"We won't be forced to flood the market with excess volume," Reeves stated, addressing concerns from analysts.

Woolworths' decision to diversify its poultry suppliers is a proactive measure to enhance customer service and ensure supply stability, rather than a reaction to pricing pressures.

"This approach is a response to the disruptions we've all faced in recent years," Reeves said.



Despite the news, Inghams shares took a hit, dropping 19.6 percent to \$3.11 amid investor concerns about the implications of the new agreement.

However, looking back at 2023-24, Inghams reported a solid 2.8 percent increase in poultry sales across Australia and New Zealand, totalling 476.4 kilotonnes.

This shift reflects changing consumer habits, with more poultry sold to supermarkets as cost-of-living pressures have reduced fast-food outings.

The long-term outlook for the poultry sector remains bright.

Revenue climbed 7.2 percent to \$3.3 billion, bolstered by

price adjustments in response to inflationary pressures, while the net selling price rose to \$6.28 per kilo, contributing to a remarkable 68 percent increase in profit, totalling \$101.5 million.

Poultry continues to be the go-to affordable protein for consumers.

For farmers, this evolution in the supply chain highlights the resilience of the poultry market and the ongoing demand for quality poultry products.

As Inghams navigates these changes, it remains committed to supporting local farmers and ensuring a steady supply of affordable protein to consumers.

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## AJ Bush improves sustainability and efficiency

AJ BUSH & Sons is one of Australia's largest east coast protein recovery providers operating rendering and manufacturing plants in NSW and Queensland.

The plants specialise in processing animal by-products for the meat and butchery industry.

The NSW Riverstone plant's collection area, in addition to Sydney Metro, ranges from Nowra in the south to Canberra, Dubbo and Bathurst up to Newcastle and Tamworth in the north.

The collected material is recycled into products used for livestock, pet food, aquaculture, fertiliser and biofuels. **How are AJ Bush & Sons' operations sustainable?**

AJ Bush's Riverstone plant has undergone numerous upgrades over the years, aligning with company goals of minimising waste, reducing the risk of odour pollution and continuous improvement in providing a safe work environment for employees.

As part of this sustainability program, plant engineer, Mr Nick Lawrance, contacted Hydro Innovations for assistance in replacing aging surface (floating) aerators on their wastewater treatment system.

Nick wanted an aeration system that could be safely monitored and maintained from the lagoon banks to keep their aeration system at peak operational efficiency.

### Sustainable aeration solution

Hydro Innovations proposed an EchoStorm aeration system from Gorman-Rupp as an alternative to traditional surface-floating aerators which have always been considered difficult and potentially hazardous to service and maintain.

These surface aerators can only be accessed by crane or rowboat, or need to be tethered to lagoon banks by a system of cables.

Because of these impediments to access, maintenance is often neglected or postponed for prolonged periods.

### What is an EchoStorm aerator?

The EchoStorm is a bank-mounted Venturi Aerator used to mix and aerate tanks, ponds and lagoons.

It uses Bernoulli's principal, whereby a low-pressure area is created by an accelerated fluid.

A Gorman-Rupp self-priming pump draws water from the source

and pumps it into the aerator under pressure.

### How do EchoStorm aerators work?

Within the EchoStorm aerator there is an acceleration zone where the pumped fluid is accelerated, creating an area of low pressure within the aspirating zone.

Here it draws in atmospheric air at the rate of 2.2 times the rate of the fluid being pumped.

The air and water then pass into the mixing and oxidation zone, where the wastewater and air are mixed under pressure.

The turbulent mixing facilitates the removal of substances with weak Henry's constants such as CO<sub>2</sub> and VOCs.

### Why are EchoStorm aerators sustainable?

- WHS risks are minimised because operators don't need cranes or row boats to access equipment

- Maintenance and operating costs are reduced when compared with surface aerators

- Bank-mounted aerator and equipment is easy to access

- Longer lifespan because equipment is more likely to be monitored and maintained

### Installation at AJ Bush & Sons plant

EchoStorm aerators can produce the desired level of mixing and dissolved oxygen transfer because they are easily scalable and can inject discharged oxygenated water at multiple points around the lagoon including the basin, tank or lake.

Importantly, thanks to the use of self-priming pumps, water can be drawn from any location within the water body to ensure complete mixing.

The rendering plant at Riverstone had originally been operating five floating surface aerators.

When one of these failed, it was decided to install an EchoStorm aeration system to trial the effectiveness and operation of the system.

### The result

Significant results were achieved after just one month of operation, especially in the reduction of surface scum, maintaining required dissolved oxygen levels, improving operating efficiencies and lower odour levels.

The other obvious benefit of the newly installed bank-mounted EchoStorm aeration system is the ability to quickly, safely and easily inspect the system or make any adjustments to the operation of the equipment, en-

suring a safe working environment for operators.

Mr Lawrance is pleased with the results and is considering replacing the balance of the old system to bank-mounted aerators.

### What sizes are EchoStorm aerators available in?

The EchoStorm is available in four sizes, from 2-6", providing dissolved oxygen transfer rates of up to 30kg per hour with a single unit, but capable of meeting any demand by using multiple units.

Efficiencies can also be gained by using larger and more efficient pumps to drive multiple EchoStorm units.

The EchoStorm not

only transfers dissolved oxygen at efficient rates, but also conditions the wastewater by breaking down organic matter as it is accelerated through the unit, making more surface area available for biological treatment.

It also oxidises sulphur-containing molecules such as hydrogen sulphide and mercaptans for effective odour and corrosion control.

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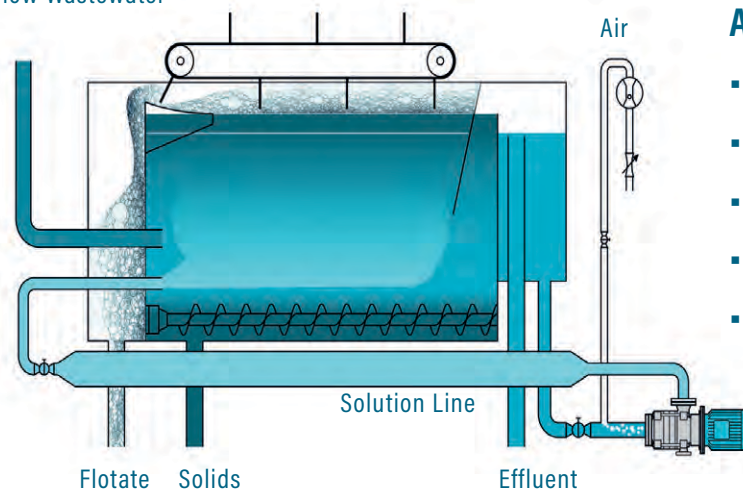
Venturi aerators reduce odours at AJ Bush & Sons.

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# Egg farmers call for national action on disease threat

AUSTRALIA'S commercial egg farmers have called on governments across the nation to take national action to register all poultry in the wake of devastating disease outbreaks that disrupted egg supplies.

Egg Farmers of Australia wants a national poultry register set up with state and federal backing to ensure people raising laying hens register their flock.

This would include backyard chooks, ducks and other poultry where homeowners would be required to register the location of their chicken coops and the number of poultry on their property.

Egg Farmers of Australia CEO Melinda Hashimoto said a central register would allow authorities to make contact with all poultry owners on the register in the event of a farm or area being impacted by disease.

An amber alert could be provided to poultry owners in a particular council area while formal testing is being undertaken.

"Egg Farmers of Australia has called on governments around the nation to pull together to invoke a national register of poultry in light of devastat-

ing outbreaks of avian Influenza in some parts of Australia this year," Ms Hashimoto said.

"Such a register would allow disease management to be improved and ensure poultry owners, including those with backyard chooks, are able to receive the same alerts at the same time detailing what they can and can't do when an outbreak occurs in their local area," she said.

The call follows recent disease outbreaks across several states and territories earlier this year that impacted over 1.5 million layer hens.

High Pathogen Avian Influenza infected backyard chooks, commercial cage, barn and free-range egg farms as well as duck and chicken meat farms in Victoria, NSW and the ACT.

During the containment phase, major supermarkets were forced to restrict the number of free-range eggs sold to customers.

Ms Hashimoto said the consideration of a register, following the largest avian Influenza event in the nation was important for all Australian food production and retail sectors.

"A national register

for all poultry is vital for the egg industry as it will help identify the entire number of hens and other poultry in an impact zone," Ms Hashimoto said.

"Such a register will make communication and the management of any disease easier for authorities.

"It will also reduce the burden to egg and poultry farmers, governments and taxpayers by allowing for a more rapid response to all poultry owners - whether commercial or backyard.

"It will also allow the general public, in particular backyard poultry owners, to better understand how the risk of wild birds impact the health of their poultry," she said.

Ms Hashimoto said backyard chook, duck and bird owners did not always appreciate the high cost of disease outbreaks to commercial egg farmers - both economically and emotionally.

"Full control of disease issues will allow commercial egg farmers to continue to work hard to bring Australian consumers an affordable protein that is found on breakfast, lunch and dinner plates," she said.

**Melinda Hashimoto**  
CEO Egg Farmers of Australia



Its versatility and affordability make chicken a global favourite. Photo: Roman Odintsov, Pexels

## Australia's chicken love story

HISTORICALLY, Australians didn't eat chicken.

As a nation we have gone from believing chicken meat to be a bit ordinary to gorging on millions of chickens each year.

Data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development shows the average Australian eats around 92.5kg of meat each year, including an impressive 42kg of chicken.

We're lucky here in Australia to have a comparatively high standard of living, allowing us to feast on meat.

This doesn't explain, however, why our consumption of chicken is

so high compared to other meats, especially considering our productive beef industry.

Australia sits third on the world table for chicken consumption, behind Israel and the USA.

Our love for chicken has grown considerably over the last 40 years.

Other meats, most significantly lamb, are now not as enticing as the humble chook.

Consumption of lamb has declined dramatically over the last few decades and beef consumption, although steady, goes through a significant demand cycle.

Where did this love for chicken come from?

The answer comes down to improved taste in chicken meat and the household budget.

Chickens used to be kept in backyards for egg production and only butchered once they were old and gnarly.

The taste of the meat was tainted with flavours from their poor diet, making chicken an unappetising alternative to the much tastier and richer flavours of beef and lamb.

Advancements driven by the Australian chicken industry improved conditions for chicken production, introducing better feeding practices, more nutritious feed, up-

graded housing for poultry and improved health management.

Bigger chickens fed on a high-quality diet in a healthy environment meant a dramatic improvement in flavour over the old backyard peckers.

Australia's love for chicken bloomed.

Crucially, chicken is also an affordable source of protein compared

with other meat varieties, making it a popular choice for hard-pressed families looking for a

tasty alternative to a traditional family roast.

The remarkable versatility of chicken meat means that it can be prepared with considerable variety.

Since the 1980s, chicken meat in its multitude of forms - from the ever-popular nuggets, wings and tenders to the simple roast chicken, has become a staple on Australian tables.

The popularity of the humble chook does not look like waning any time soon!



Chicken popularity has boomed since the advent of the simple nugget in the 1980s. Photo: Meggy Kadam Aryanto, Pexels



Healthy chooks fed on a high-quality diet produce tastier meat. Photo: Oleksandr P, Pexels

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zoetis

# Block broods over broilers

WHILE still inspired by news of the Better Chicken Commitment, as covered in last month's column, I delved further recently and 'visited' the USA.

Well, at least the worldwide web home of the Humane Society of the United States, where I quickly pecked away at an interesting piece by its CEO and President, Kitty Block, who I'll discuss in more detail later.

I'd like to share her brooding comments on broiler chickens here with you:

Several years ago, people in the Netherlands learned about the plight of what animal advocates dubbed 'exploding chickens.'

Known in the industry as broiler chickens, these birds are bred to grow so quickly that they reach slaughter weight in just six weeks.

Such rapid growth leads to debilitating leg disorders that make it painful to walk, disproportionate heart and lung development and muscle myopathies, such as woody breast syndrome, which hardens muscles and prevents birds from righting themselves if they fall over.

Selectively bred from the fastest growing birds over many generations, the birds essentially hatch to suffer, growing into bodies so obstructive they're like cages.

The birds struggle to walk as they grow larger and larger and can do little more than sit and eat, crowded into filthy sheds, often suffering from ammonia burns on their feet, legs and breasts, the result of standing and lying in their own waste.

In a single, dimly-lit shed, thousands of chickens are routinely crammed together with insufficient space for each animal and little opportunity for these inquisitive creatures to express their natural behaviour.

In progress for improved welfare, the Dutch successfully advocated to remove this kind of chicken from grocery stores in the Netherlands.

But elsewhere, any welfare improvements for these rapidly growing birds have been painfully slow.

And when it comes to any welfare concern for chickens, the scale of such suffering is huge.

More chickens are raised and killed for meat than any other land species, with over

75 billion slaughtered globally.

However, there's hope for improving broiler chicken welfare through the Better Chicken Commitment.

Working alongside other respected animal welfare organisations, the Humane Society of the United States initiated the formation of the Better Chicken Commitment.

An agreed-upon set of science-based standards to improve broiler chicken welfare, the BCC stipulates key requirements for higher welfare practices such as more space for birds, natural light and environmental enrichment, as well as slower-growing genetics and improved slaughter conditions.

There are Better Chicken projects in the US and Canada, Europe, Brazil, Australia and New Zealand.

If more supermarkets and food retailers signed up to the BCC to ensure these welfare standards across their supply chain, it could have a transformative impact on the entire industry.

We are pushing the industry to improve animal welfare throughout chickens' lives, which means intervening even before birds hatch.

Fast growing breeds should be replaced with slower growing breeds which do not suffer the same ailments as those bred for quick growth.

The challenge is that it costs more to keep slower growing chickens and to give them more space, which means fewer birds in the barn and less income from each flock.

Many retailers are reluctant to pass this cost on to consumers, preventing more rapid adoption of better standards.

But it's the lowest-priced animal products that often come with the highest ethical cost.

Of all animals, chickens are suffering the most for the world's expectation that meat be cheap.

Every choice and every purchase matters.

If everyone who consumes animal products demanded transparency about welfare condi-



Cant  
Comment  
by BRENDON CANT

protection organisation in the fight for all animals.

Block was named president and CEO of the Humane Society of the United States in January 2019, becoming the first woman to hold the position in the organisation's history.

Block first joined the HSUS as a legal investigator in 1992.

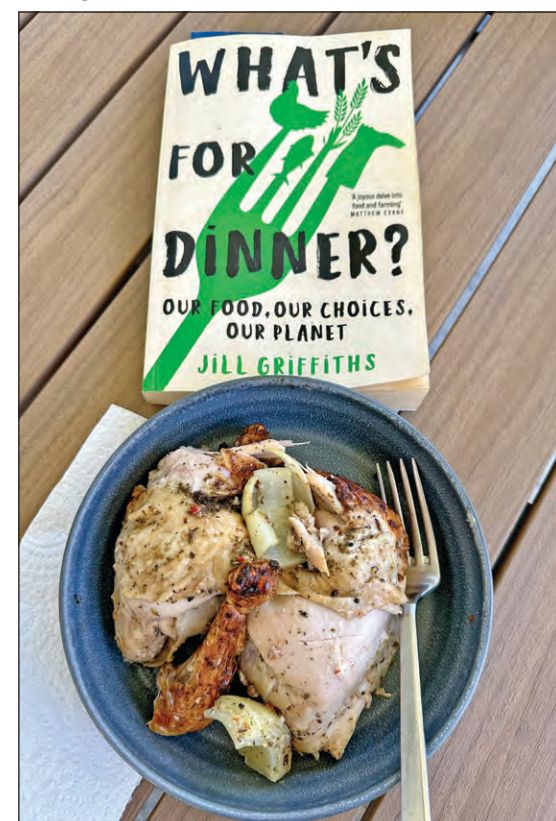
She has served as an advisor to the White House on trade and the environment and has served multiple elected terms on the International Dolphin Conservation Agreement International Review Panel, which works with governments on monitoring violations of the agreement.

In 2023, Forbes named Block on its 50 Over 50 list of women who are changing the world.

Block received a law degree from The George Washington University in 1990 and, in 1986, a bachelor's degree in communications and philosophy from the University of New Hampshire.



Kitty Block, CEO and president of Humane Society of the United States and CEO of Humane Society International, boils when it comes to unfortunate broilers. Visit Humane Society International at [hsi.org](http://hsi.org)



Let's hope consumers think before they buy and have higher welfare choices available to them when it comes to plating up chicken. Meat from happy, healthy chickens, preferably pasture-raised, is the way to go. Broilers breaking down due to poor genetics is not the go.





## Egg shortage goes global

FOLLOWING recent devastating bird flu outbreaks around the world, prices for eggs have soared, putting pressure on supplies.

According to analysts at Rabobank Global, average egg prices are 60 percent higher than in 2019.

A rapid appreciation has led to political point-scoring by JD Vance on the US election campaign trail.

Egg shortages have also created temporary curbs to McDonald's breakfast service in Australia.

A key factor in surging prices has been the devastating outbreaks of avian flu in North America and Europe, which have led to the culling of tens of millions of laying birds.

Roughly 33 million commercial laying hens and pullets were culled in the US between November 2023 and July this year.

"The lingering effects of bird flu have been compounded by rising

demand," said Karyn Rispoli, managing editor of eggs at Expana, a commodity trading data provider.

She said consumers were also switching to eggs as a more affordable source of protein than meat.

Rabobank noted that concerns about the carbon footprint of meat consumption was also driving demand for eggs.

These factors have led to Americans paying more than three times as much for eggs today than five years ago.

Data has indicated that egg lovers in the US have been subject to big pricing swings in recent years.

"Increasing the flock size to meet demand takes time, but we're working on it," said Emily Metz, president and chief executive of the American Egg Board.

Globally, the avian flu outbreak is hitting other markets, notably Australia, which has led to egg rationing by

some supermarkets.

In July, the global fast-food giant, McDonald's, temporarily curbed breakfast service hours in some Australian outlets, reportedly in response to the bird flu egg shortage.

In the medium term, there are signs of relief for US consumers, with wholesale US egg prices falling 49 percent since August 16, as laying bird stocks recovered.

However, Nan-Dirk Mulder, a global specialist in animal protein working at RaboResearch, is cautious about whether this will translate to lower prices on the supermarket shelves.

"For the time being, until the end of the year, I think we will continue to see relatively high prices; perhaps a bit lower than now, as the stocks rebuild.

"But as for the future - it all depends on whether there will be further avian influenza outbreaks over the winter, and that's difficult to predict," he said.

# Ingham's feeding Australia: a century of quality chicken

FOR over a century, this proud Australian brand has been central to our lunch and dinner tables, producing quality chicken to feed Australia every day.

Around our nation, lunchtime favourites include chicken sandwiches, chicken burgers and chicken salads inspired from all corners of the world.

Into the evening the chicken recipe range really erupts - chicken nuggets, pizzas, pastas, parmigiana and other pub favourites.

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This protein-packed ingredient is just so versatile and healthy too.

It has cemented itself as our country's number one meat choice - with Ingham's leading the way in producing Australian chicken to feed our nation.

**Poultry in Australia - a one-hundred-year strong history at Ingham's**

Founded in 1918, Ingham's has evolved from a small, family-owned business into the largest integrated poultry supplier in Australia.

With 286 facilities

scattered across the nation, Ingham's stands as a testament to growth, innovation and unwavering commitment to quality.

Our operations include everything from breeding and hatching to processing and distribution, all carefully managed to deliver top-quality chicken products underpinned by commitments to animal welfare, our people, sustainability and the environment.

**Serving up Australian chicken across our country**

Ingham's is a key contributor to Australia's food supply chain.

Whether you're dining at a local pub, grabbing a quick bite at a major fast-food outlet, or enjoying a meal at a restaurant, the likelihood that you're enjoying Ingham's poultry is high.

We also play a crucial role in supplying major supermarkets, ensuring that Australian chicken is readily available for home cooks across the country.

We're feeding those in need too.

For over a decade, Ingham's has been donating product to Foodbank - a not-for-profit

organisation that provides 77 million meals a year via charities and schools.

This partnership ensures that food waste is reduced by redirecting perfectly edible food products to those who need it.

**Ingham's poultry products**

Ingham's product range is vast and varied.

From fresh chicken cuts to a delightful array of flavoured and coated chicken products, Ingham's offers something for everyone - and it's all grown and made right here in Australia.

Our commitment to quality is in every bite, with rigorous standards maintained throughout operations to guarantee that each product meets their high benchmarks.

The impact of Ingham's extends beyond the dinner table.

With a workforce of 8,200 employees spread throughout Australian communities, Ingham's plays a vital role in the nation's economy.

These jobs support local families and contribute to the economic wellbeing of the areas where Ingham's operates.

The company's scale

and reach mean that its influence is felt far beyond the confines of its facilities, weaving into the daily lives of countless Australians.

Commitment to our people and the communities we operate in are paramount, with diversity, inclusion and flexibility as cornerstones of our workplace.

Ingham's is not just a brand, it's a piece of Australian history.

From its origins in 1918 to its position as a major supplier of poultry in Australia, Ingham's has continually delivered quality chicken products to homes and businesses across the country.

At Ingham's, we are committed to feeding Australia, keeping our plates full and our taste buds satisfied, with healthy, nutritious Australian-grown chicken, produced with animal welfare and sustainability practices at the centre.

For more information about Ingham's network of foodservice partners, or to view our range of products, visit [ingham.com.au/foodservice/food-services-products](http://ingham.com.au/foodservice/food-services-products) 

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 Phone: +61 2 9844 5700  
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Controlling any outbreak of the H5N1 avian influenza virus will take a national effort. Image credit: Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action

## Fight to keep deadly avian influenza strain at bay

AUSTRALIA'S ability to fight off a deadly strain of avian influenza will be put to the test in a bid to keep a global outbreak ripping through animal populations overseas at bay.

No cases of H5N1 avian influenza have yet been detected in Australian animals but there are concerns it could cause significant damage to native wildlife and poultry.

Billions of animals are believed to have died in the global outbreak, with 1.6 million poultry birds dead or culled from mid-July to mid-August alone, according to the World Organisation for Animal Health.

Australia is currently the only continent

without an outbreak of H5N1 but there are fears it could enter through migratory birds.

Leaders in emergency management, health, the environment, animal welfare and poultry producers are joining forces for a series of exercises examining how the nation would act on a rush of local cases.

They'll also put international responses under the microscope and have promised to make recommendations from the review public.

The only recorded case of H5N1 in a human in Australia has been a two-year-old girl who was in intensive care for a fortnight after returning from

India in March 2024, according to the World Health Organisation.

But outbreaks of two other strains of avian influenza have already rocked Australia's poultry industry this year, with more than 1.3 million meat and egg-producing birds culled in NSW and Victoria.

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Julie Collins, described the situation as "dynamic" as she highlighted concerns about the impact to wildlife, threatened species and agriculture.

"While we can't stop the natural migration patterns of wild birds that may be sick, we can prepare ourselves if that does occur by ensuring we are work-

ing together in this national effort to protect Australia," she said.

Health minister Mark Butler said it was important to remember most strains did not easily spread to humans.

"It's important people are aware human infections of avian influenza are rare – and the current risk to the Australian population remains very low," he said.

"When there are human cases, they typically occur after a person has had close contact with sick birds and livestock or contaminated environments.

"Poultry workers are most at risk," he said.

**Rachael Ward**  
AAP

## City birds found to be carriers of antimicrobial resistant bacteria

RESEARCH from the Ineos Oxford Institute for Antimicrobial Research at Oxford University has revealed that wild birds, such as ducks and crows, living near human populations—especially in urban areas—are likely to carry bacteria with antimicrobial resistance.

This highlights the urgent need for policymakers and health services to address the various ways antibiotic-resistant bacteria can spread beyond hospital settings.

AMR occurs when bacteria and other microbes become resistant to antibiotics that would typically kill them.

In 2022, around 58,224 people in the UK suffered severe antibiotic-resistant infections, resulting in 2202 deaths.

Globally, AMR was linked to 1.27 million deaths in 2019, with the World Health Organisation classifying it as one of the most pressing global public health and development challenges.

In a new study published in *Current Biology*, researchers analyzed 700 bacterial samples from the gut microbiomes of 30 wild bird species across eight countries.

They focused on *Campylobacter jejuni*, a bacteria that commonly causes diarrhea and can be transmitted between animals and humans (a zoonotic disease).

Through genomic analysis, the study explored the diversity of *C. jejuni* strains and the presence of AMR genes, using a novel statistical model to examine how bird behavior and location influenced these factors.

AMR-related genetic markers were found in all bird species studied.

Birds living near

humans, like crows and ducks, carried a wider range of bacterial strains and up to three times more AMR genes compared to birds in more remote areas.

This included genes resistant to commonly used antibiotics such as fluoroquinolones and beta-lactams.

Professor Samuel Sheppard, lead author of the study and Digital Microbiology and Bioinformatics Lead at the Ineos Oxford Institute, said: "AMR is a complex issue affecting human health, animals, and the environment.

Wild birds can spread AMR over long distances to livestock and pets, which has implications for agriculture, animal welfare, and food security."

Urban animals are exposed to various sources of AMR bacteria, like wastewater-contaminated rivers, and may play a role in transmitting these bacteria to humans.

As urbanization continues and human populations expand, greater contact between humans and wild animals increases the risk of spreading zoonotic pathogens.

Despite the global health threat posed by AMR, research on how habitat disruption impacts the bacteria in animals living close to humans is limited.

This study offers valuable quantitative evidence of AMR transmission across ecosystems and highlights the interconnected roles of humans, animals, and the environment in spreading AMR.

Given that birds can travel great distances, species like crows and thrushes, which thrive in urban areas, could contribute significantly to AMR spread.

The data from this study will be crucial for future research aimed at understanding the broader impact of human expansion on zoonotic pathogens and AMR.

The study, "Proximity to humans is associated with antimicrobial resistant enteric pathogens in wild bird microbiomes," is published in *Current Biology*.

The research included samples from Canada, Finland, Italy, Lithuania, Japan, Sweden, the UK, and the USA.



Antimicrobial resistance occurs when disease-causing microbes such as bacteria become resistant to antibiotics that would otherwise kill them. Image credit: Anna Shvets: Pexels



The new study found that wild birds living close to humans in cities are likely to carry bacteria with antimicrobial resistance (AMR). Image credit: Viktor Keri: Unsplash

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## Plant-based meat not that healthy

NEW research shows that plant-based meat products can be high in sugar and are often lacking important nutrients found in real meat.

Lead author Maria Shahid said that despite the growing popularity of plant-based meat substitutes – often based on health reasons – there is very little evidence of the actual health impact of these products.

“Both plant-based and processed meats mostly fall into the ultra-processed category, so this raises concerns about their role in a healthy diet,” Ms Shahid said.

Plant-based meats, or meat analogues, are designed to mimic meat products and act as a substitute for meat protein.

They are commonly made from plant-based vegetable protein – soy protein, wheat protein, pea and rice protein, or a combination – or fermentation-based fungus protein, mycoprotein.

With consumer demand driving the proliferation of new products emulating

the structure, texture, taste and appearance of traditional meat products, sales in Australia alone are estimated to rise to almost \$3 billion by 2030.

George Institute researchers used the institute’s FoodSwitch database to assess and compare the nutrient content and nutritional quality of plant-based meat analogues and their equivalent meat products available in Australian supermarkets.

The types of meat products and plant-based meat analogue equivalents studied were burgers, meatballs, mince, sausages, bacon, coated poultry, plain poultry and meat with pastry.

They found that using the Australian Government’s Health Star Rating system, overall plant-based meat analogues were found to have a healthier nutritional profile compared with equivalent meat products, and their energy content was marginally lower.

While the protein content was similar in both categories, plant-based meat ana-

logues on average had significantly less saturated fat and sodium as well as more fibre than meat products.

But of the 132 plant-based meat analogues analysed, only 12 percent were fortified with key micro-nutrients essential for health that are found in meat – iron, vitamin B12 and zinc.

George Institute dietitian Dr Daisy Coyle said that in Australia, processed meats have been classified as discretionary foods in the national dietary guidelines and have been linked to various types of cancer, so consumers are advised to limit these meats as part of a healthy diet.

“But it isn’t as simple as a straight swap – solely relying on meat alternatives as a direct replacement for meat could lead to iron, zinc and B12 deficiencies over time, if you are not boosting your intake of these essential nutrients from other sources or taking supplements,” Dr Coyle said.

**The George Institute for Global Health**



Travellers have been advised to remain vigilant over outbreaks of avian influenza. Photo: AAP/James Ross



Several strains of bird flu have had outbreaks in recent months. Photo: Getty/Peter Garrard Beck

## Australians issued new ‘health risks’ travel warning for Europe, Asia and the Americas

THE government’s Smartraveller website has issued a notice of increased health risks in Europe, North and South America and Asia.

### Key points

- Smartraveller has issued a warning over outbreaks of several strains of avian influenza, also known as bird flu

- People visiting Europe, North and South America and Asia are advised to be aware of health risks

- Avian influenza mainly affects birds, and infection in humans is rare.

The Australian government is warning travellers to Europe, North and South America and Asia about out-

breaks of avian influenza, commonly known as bird flu.

According to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade’s Smartraveller website, while human infection is rare, travellers should be aware of increased health risks when visiting impacted countries.

There have been several strains of avian influenza circulating in recent months, including the highly infectious H5N1 strain.

Three separate strains of bird flu have been detected across poultry farms in Australia this year, prompting mass culls and egg shortages in parts of the country.

### What is the travel advice for bird flu?

There is no vaccine available for avian in-

fluenza, but according to Smartraveller, getting the annual influenza vaccine can help reduce the threat of the virus to humans.

Travellers are advised to minimise contact with animals in affected areas, avoid poultry farms and live bird ‘wet’ markets, and wash hands often and thoroughly.

Eggs and poultry meat are safe to eat, but they must be cooked thoroughly, and safe food handling practices must be followed.

Travellers are advised to research the health risks in any destination and ensure influenza vaccines are up to date before travel.

Anybody with symptoms is advised to see a doctor.

### What is avian influenza?

Avian influenza is an infectious disease caused by influenza A viruses, similar to the virus that causes seasonal influenza in humans.

As the name suggests, the viruses mainly affect birds but can infect other animals.

It rarely spreads to humans, but it is possible.

Symptoms can include eye irritation, fever, sore throat or cough, runny or blocked nose, muscle or body aches, fatigue, shortness of breath and pneumonia.

Less common symptoms can include nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea or seizures.

Some people may not show any symptoms

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# Chicken sheds come clean

ALTHOUGH Australian Pump Industries is a leading designer and manufacturer of high-pressure cleaning equipment, with a range that includes everything from petrol and diesel drives to electric cold wash and hot wash equipment, they're most famous for quality and performance.

The background of their success is simply a desire to produce better equipment that is currently on the market, to sell it at a fair price and give features that make operation simpler, safer, easier and more pleasant.

**Operator convenience**  
"We design and manufacture products as if we're going to use them ourselves," Aussie Pumps Chief Engineer, John Hales, said.

"It's about getting the job done faster, easier and safer with a reliable machine," he said. John is the father of the unique Scud design that puts a 'smile on the face' of operators.

The machine was conceived, designed and built in Australia. It's claimed to be by far the world's best, safest and most popular concept design in the business.

The machines are built in Sydney at Aussie's new production facility, which is turning out more and more machines each year.

"We doubled production last year," Hales said.

"Even now we struggle to keep up with demand.

"Once people try the product, they never go back," he said.

## Scud performance is safer and faster

The machine is equipped with the world's best heavy duty triplex pump.

It has gearbox drive, a totally enclosed drive train and is matched to the relevant Honda petrol engine.

The most popular

is the Scud 400 with 4000psi performance and 15LPM flow.

"That's a great combination for most jobs," Hales said.

"You don't use a lot of water but still get the benefit of 4000psi and real cleaning power.

"Shed washing is a breeze with this machine," he said.

The sculpted stainless-steel frame makes the machine look more like a cross between a Bobcat and a Ferrari rather than a pressure cleaner.

The design makes it easy to push around.

It is beautifully balanced, and all pumps are fitted with a safety kit as standard equipment.

The 'Big Bertie' pump has a big crank case that enables it to run cool even in continuous cleaning applications.

The safety valve is included with every machine, as well as a thermal dump valve that prevents overheating when left on bypass for extended running.

## Time is money

Using accessories like turbos means you achieve a much faster and safer result.

Turbos, fitted to the 4000psi Scud, provide an impact up to EWP 6485psi.

Effective working pressure is the industry's way of indicating increased impact - a combination of flow and pressure.

Other accessories include stainless steel

hose reels that can carry up to 50m of high-pressure hose, providing an effective range of operation to 100m.

Telescopic wands provide 6m of reach, enabling effective cleaning of roof battens without the need for ladders.

Flat surface cleaners can clean up to 85 percent faster than a standard lance, saving labour, water and power, and the results have no streaks!

For Honda petrol-drive machines, we recommend electric start.

It's not that the engine is hard to start but the operator will appreciate the simple key start every time they turn it on.

It doesn't cost a lot extra but makes for a more pleasant experience.

## Safer and smarter

Aussie's free online Safe Operator Training program is available for all operators of all brands of machines.

The company is keen to show operators that by knowing more about the equipment, they can operate not only more safely but more efficiently as well.

It explains how triplex pumps and pressure technology work and covers how to use the equipment in a safe and positive way.

For further information, including a Triplex Pump Technology booklet and the training course details, visit [aussiepumps.com.au](http://aussiepumps.com.au).



Aussie Scud Deluxe pressure washers coming off the production line at Aussie Pumps new factory in Norwest, Sydney.



Charles Sturt University has been working with DAFF since 2022, utilising the university's teaching and research strengths to train more than 840 frontline biosecurity officers.

# \$30 million biosecurity hub to safeguard Australia

RECENTLY, Australia's defence against crippling biosecurity threats was strengthened with the launch of the Charles Sturt University Biosecurity Hub, a co-investment in research and training of almost \$30 million to enhance the nation's biosecurity defences, protecting our food, farms and communities.

The announcement was made at an event at the National Press Club in Canberra on Tuesday August 20.

The hub brings together a multidisciplinary team of expert researchers, scientists and trainers from various fields, including microbiology, ecology, veterinary and animal science, environmental science, artificial intelligence and cyber futures, extended reality and biosecurity training.

The university has long-standing partnerships in biosecurity - including collaborations with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Asia-Pacific government and industry partners, state government agencies, industry and the community - and is equipped to tackle a range of current or emerging biosecurity threats in the Indo-Pacific region.

The hub focuses on leadership in research and development, traceability innovation, education and training, capacity-building initiatives and building and

maintaining strong partnerships.

It will specifically respond to threats as outlined by the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, where it is estimated that invasive species cost Australia approximately \$25 billion a year.

Estimations for specific diseases are as dire - the direct economic impact of a large multi-state outbreak of foot and mouth disease could reach \$80 billion over 10 years.

If khapra beetle were to become established, it could cost the economy \$15.5 billion over 20 years.

Charles Sturt vice-chancellor and president Professor Renée Leon expressed pride in the global impact the university was having on protecting Australia and neighbouring countries against potentially devastating biosecurity pests and diseases.

"Charles Sturt University is a national leader in biosecurity research and training initiatives, spearheading innovation and transformation efforts to safeguard Australia's food, farms, environment and communities from the increasing threats posed by pests, weeds and diseases," Professor Leon said.

"Our biosecurity hub focuses on strengthening Australia's capacity to detect, prevent and respond to pests and diseases that

threaten our food, farms and our future."

Biosecurity Training Centre academic director David Mackay highlighted the university was at the forefront of training frontline personnel who are protecting Australia's borders and those of its Asia-Pacific partners.

"Charles Sturt University has been working with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry since 2022, utilising the university's teaching and research strengths to train more than 840 frontline biosecurity officers in capabilities, contributing to the sector's goal of growing the country's agricultural production to \$100 billion by 2030," Mr Mackay said.

Charles Sturt Gulbali Institute for Agriculture, Water and Environment executive director Professor Lee Baumgartner said the hub's program of biosecurity activities was dedicated to identifying and mitigating biosecurity threats.

Professor Baumgartner mentioned the university's 'training hub promoting regional industry and innovation in virology and epidemiology' program as a key initiative.

"THRIIVE is dedicated to developing skills in agricultural epidemiology and virology to identify and counter zoonotic viruses such as foot and mouth disease virus, Japanese encephalitis virus, avian influenza virus, swine flu,

Australian bat lyssavirus and Hendra virus," Professor Baumgartner said.

More than 130 people from industry, government, academia and regional communities attended the event at the National Press Club on August 20, 2024.

In addition to hearing about the hub, guests heard from some of Australia's leading biosecurity experts, including:

- DAFF Biosecurity, Operations and Compliance Group deputy secretary Justine Saunders

- DAFF Australian chief veterinary officer Dr Beth Cookson

- Local Land Services Animal Biosecurity and Welfare program lead Dr Scott Ison

- Charles Sturt University Biosecurity Training Centre academic director David Mackay.

Professor Leon encouraged those interested in making a global impact to consider the range of courses offered at Charles Sturt, which equips students with the skills needed to address biosecurity challenges.

"Our diverse range of courses, such as the Bachelor of Veterinary Science, offer strong foundations in sciences, preparing students for a range of careers in biosecurity," Professor Leon said.

In the past five years, Charles Sturt University has produced more than 640 graduating students with biosecurity capabilities.

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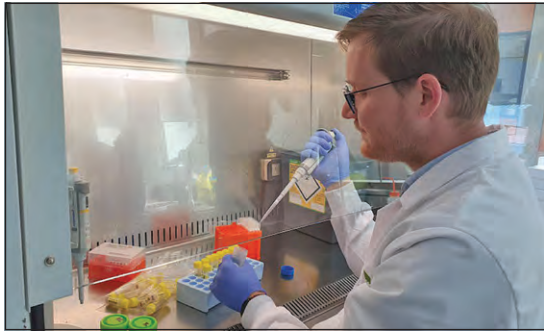


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The testing by Agriculture Victoria is gold standard and methods casting a wider net are being trialled. Photos: Jane McNaughton, ABC Rural



Dr Peter Mee says when positive results come through "you have some dread."



The diagnostics van is set up to detect disease on-farm.



Dr Peter Mee says they are aiming to detect disease before there are clinical presentations.



Up to 50,000 chickens can be housed in sheds on Victorian chicken farms. Photo: Kyle Harley, ABC News

## Positive signs after Victoria's bird flu outbreak

IT'S been over three months since Victoria's largest bird flu outbreak began, and there's now hope for the industry as farms start to recover.

Agriculture Victoria has confirmed that one affected farm has begun restocking poultry, and quarantine measures are being scaled back after two months without any new cases.

Behind the scenes, thousands of experts have been screening, researching, and analyz-

ing to contain the outbreak. One of them, Dr Peter Mee, a senior virology researcher at Agriculture Victoria, has been working tirelessly.

"There was a rush of activity when we got the first positive result," said Dr Mee.

"It's been a major event—processing thousands of samples, seven days a week, for months. But the team has been incredible."

Dr Mee is based at the AgriBio lab at La Trobe University's Bundoora

campus, where swab tests from quarantined farms are analyzed daily to guide the biosecurity response.

"It's been fascinating to see the outbreak unfold and provide rapid diagnostics to support the response and help farmers understand what's happening," he said.

Grant Rawlin, a research director, has been on-site since the outbreak began in May, working from a mobile diagnostics van at the affected farm.

"Controlling highly infectious diseases is all about speed. This van helps us get results within 24 hours, bringing us closer to staying ahead of the virus," Rawlin said.

Due to the outbreak, all 400,000 birds at the farm were euthanized.

Despite 30 years as a veterinarian, Rawlin said this has been the largest and most complex operation he's handled. "It's been stressful, but you just get it done."

In Victorian broiler sheds, which can house up to 50,000 chickens, deaths are normal, but in a bird flu outbreak, any deaths are concerning.

"All dead birds are collected and swabbed for testing," Rawlin explained.

"It's tough seeing large numbers of animals get sick, but we've managed to catch outbreaks before they were visible."

Dr Mee said the department had been preparing for a large outbreak since Victoria's last one in 2020.

"We ran mock scenar-

ios earlier this year to smooth out any processing issues before facing real detections."

Rawlin noted that these exercises were invaluable.

"Without them, this would have been much harder.

They revealed gaps that we were able to fill, so when the real thing hit, we were much more efficient."

As the recovery continues, both government and industry are preparing for the potential arrival of a more contagious bird flu strain, expected in Australia this spring.

Rawlin is confident the team can handle it. "We're ready. The systems are the same, even

though human health and wildlife will play a bigger role."

To improve early detection, trials are underway using air quality testing in places like chicken sheds.

While PCR testing remains the gold standard, Dr Mee said they're looking for faster methods that could detect diseases like COVID.

"We're trying to catch the disease earlier and give farmers and industry bodies an earlier warning."

The clean-up and testing at affected farms will continue for several months until Victoria can confirm freedom from the disease and return to normal trading conditions.



Grant Rawlin has worked as a veterinarian for 30 years.



Airborne disease detecting devices are being used in trials.



Agriculture Victoria vans and trucks are on site at an egg farm near Meredith to help detect disease.



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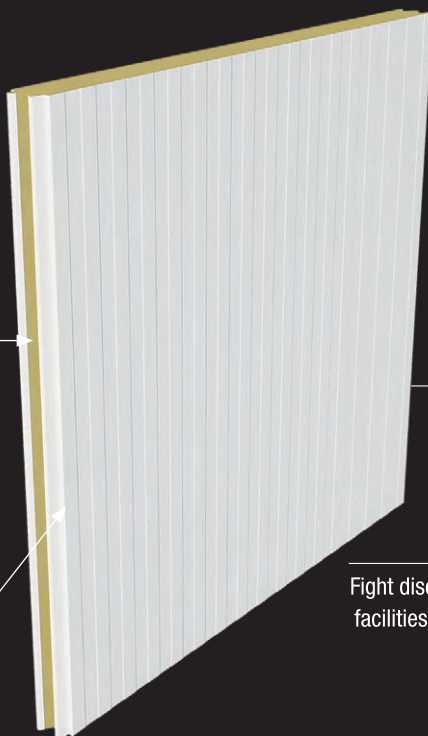
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# Stopping avian influenza in your backyard

AVIAN influenza, or bird flu, is a disease carried by wild birds that can cause severe disease in poultry.

There are many strains of the virus, including the H5 strain that has caused mass poultry deaths overseas.

So far, Australia has been lucky enough to evade this strain.

Avian influenza can be carried by wild birds such as ducks, geese, and swans and passed to backyard poultry or pet birds through exposure

to these wild animals.

If you own or work with any type of poultry or birds, it's important to be vigilant in looking for any health changes.

The signs of avian influenza are similar to other bird diseases, so always check with your vet if you notice something unusual.

#### Look out for:

- Single or several birds suddenly dying
- Diarrhoea
- Birds eating or drinking less
- Unusual reduction in egg production

• Birds sneezing or looking unwell.

There are also some simple things you can do to help protect your birds.

#### These are:

- Don't feed wild birds or encourage them to mix with your poultry or pet birds
- Use netting to prevent contact between domestic and wild birds
- Clean your birds' housing and equipment regularly and don't share it with other bird owners
- If you bring in new birds, keep them sepa-

rate and monitor them for at least 30 days before introducing them to your existing flock

• If your poultry are free range, monitor them daily for signs of disease

• Be ready to house your birds separately if they show signs of illness.

Avian influenza does not easily spread to people and is a low risk to the public, but it's still important to maintain good hygiene around poultry and pet birds.

Avoid touching sick or dead birds, or if you

need to touch them, wear gloves and wash your hands afterwards.

Always wash your hands after handling birds, eggs and equipment.

Clothes and shoes should be washed after visiting a bird show, aviary, or chicken run.

If you see sick or dead birds, contact your vet or the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888.

Learn the facts about bird flu and how to protect your birds at [agriculture.gov.au/birdflu](http://agriculture.gov.au/birdflu)



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 National Key Account Manager - Poultry  
[juan@ccdanimalhealth.com.au](mailto:juan@ccdanimalhealth.com.au)  
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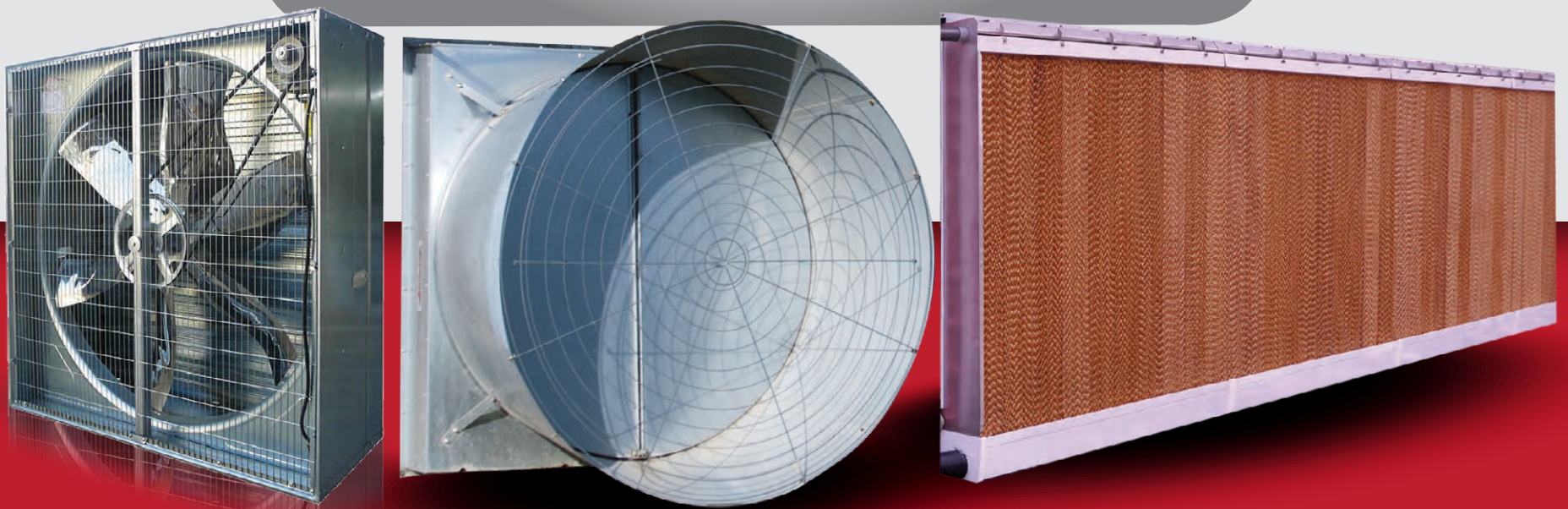
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