



IAATO 2025-26 Avian Influenza Protocols

Since 2021, the increasing intensity of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1 outbreaks has resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of seabirds worldwide. Marine mammals, including seals and sea lions, have also been affected.

On February 25, 2024, the first cases of avian influenza were confirmed in the Antarctic Treaty Area. Since then, HPAI has been detected in multiple locations on the Antarctic Peninsula.

The Antarctic community, from Antarctic Treaty parties to scientists, National Antarctic Programs, and the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO), is concerned about the effect of avian influenza in Antarctica, the profound impact its spread could have on the local wildlife, and the risk it could pose to humans.

IAATO members are committed to the robust procedures in place to protect Antarctica from pathogens and non-native species. With the confirmation of avian influenza in the region, we continue to maintain heightened vigilance regarding operations this season.

Here is how you can help prevent avian influenza from being introduced and spread:

Before you go

Before you leave home, ensure that anything that may come into contact with the Antarctic environment – including clothing and equipment - is thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.

- Use IAATO's [Don't Pack a Pest](#) guidance to assist you.

In Antarctica: Visiting Wildlife

Existing protocols, including daily biosecurity procedures, are crucial to protecting Antarctica.

In addition, it is required that you:

- Maintain a distance of at least 5 metres (15 feet) from wildlife at all times.
- Do not sit, kneel, crouch, or lay down in wildlife areas.
- Do not place any equipment on the ground or snow in wildlife areas.

Your operator will keep you informed, and if in doubt, please ask your guides for direction.

Latest information, World Organization of Animal Health: <https://www.woah.org/en/disease/avian-influenza/>

Latest information, SCAR Antarctic Wildlife Health Working Group: <https://scar.org/library-data/avian-flu>.

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