



IAATO 2026-27 Avian Influenza & Wildlife Disease 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 around the world. Marine mammals, including seals and sea lions, have also been affected.

In the Southern Hemisphere, avian influenza was first detected in South America in the spring of 2023 and confirmed in the Antarctic Treaty Area in February 2024. Additionally, while testing for avian influenza in the Antarctic, other wildlife diseases, such as avian cholera, were also detected.

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 effects of avian influenza and other wildlife diseases in Antarctica, and the serious impact they could have on the local wildlife and human health.

IAATO members are committed to the robust procedures in place to protect humans and Antarctic wildlife from pathogens and prevent non-native species (NNS) from spreading to Antarctica. We will continue to maintain heightened vigilance regarding operations this season.

Here is how you can do your part to prevent avian influenza and other wildlife diseases from being introduced and spread:

Before you go

Before you leave home, ensure 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.
- If you plan to explore a gateway country before your expedition, consider using a separate set of clothing and equipment to reduce the risk of transmitting non-native species (NNS).
- Avoid visiting areas where avian influenza is known or suspected to be present before your expedition. If you plan to visit these areas, do so after your expedition instead.



In Antarctica: Visiting Wildlife

Existing protocols, including daily biosecurity procedures and maintaining minimum distances from wildlife, are essential to protecting Antarctica.

In addition, it is required that you:

- Do not sit or lie 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.

Protecting Antarctica is a shared responsibility for all who have the privilege of experiencing this extraordinary place firsthand. By familiarising yourself with these protocols and putting them into practice in the field, you're helping to safeguard the region and its wildlife.

Thank you for acting for Antarctica.

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>.