

FS Webinar September 20, 2023

Q&A

Q: Do you know if there are other illnesses that create these types of abnormal behavior? I saw an emperor penguin in 2020 with this type of behavior during the winter.

Tom Hart

A: Newcastle's disease has certainly been found in Kings and has some neurological symptoms. Also, some symptoms can be confused with exhaustion. The big difference is head back/circles rather than clumsiness.

Q: So far the protocols are only required for Antarctica and South Georgia:

* Existing protocols, including daily biosecurity procedures and maintaining minimum distances from wildlife, are an essential part of protecting Antarctica.

In addition, it is required that you:

- Do not sit, kneel or lay down.
- Do not place any equipment on the ground or snow.

Please let me know if the above applies for the Falklands as well.

Amanda Lynnes | IAATO

A: Hello Juan. Thank you. Please keep checking back at the website here: <https://www.falklands.gov.fk/agriculture/avian-influenza> There are updated protocols and this is where suspected or confirmed cases will be posted also.

Q: do we know if in mammals its passed mammal to mammal or if only from guano or eating dead birds

Michelle Wille

A: This is the million-dollar question. In the vast majority of mammalian cases the answer is a 100% no. The sealions comprise a question mark - work is being undertaken to try to resolve this.

Q: Would human symptoms look like flu or is there anything in particular to look for in humans

Jennifer Black - GSGSSI

A: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/bird-flu/>

Q: Is there a human testing kit for avian flu?

Michelle Wille

A: Generally, its done using PCR following pneumonia or in cases where humans have been confirmed to have interacted with sick/dead infected birds.

Q: Are the killer whales off of Cape Valdez being infected by eating sea lions?

Michelle Wille

A: We don't know. Cetaceans are hard, as if they die, they may die at sea. A small number of Cetaceans have turned up positive to date, but we just don't have a good understanding of how they get infected, and how many have become infected. I have not yet read anything about finding dead orcas in the area, but most of the sealions affected have been on the Pacific coast, with only recent detected in the Atlantic coast.

Q: Do you know how long the incubation period is for the birds before they show symptoms?

Michelle Wille

A: I don't know the exact amount of time, but it's usually very short - a few days at most.

Q: If birds survive an infection in their colony - are they then immune should it come through again?

Michelle Wille

A: They would develop robust antibodies that should protect them. But this virus evolves rapidly, so they are very good at evading the immune system. We also find that some bird species (such as ducks) don't carry antibodies for a long time- they are often reinfected. But this is a key point of research currently.

Tom Hart

A: As Michelle mentioned in the Gannets, it seems likely that the recovered birds with black irises may be largely immune. Many of the gannet colonies have bounced back, likely because of the large population of non-breeders under normal conditions.

Q: How is avian flu predicted to continue in the future? The numbers are worrisome, are there any precautions taken worldwide? What should be done on a large scale to prevent spreading?

Michelle Wille

A: This is a big question! A key thing is to control this virus in poultry. Poultry are an important source of virus and the key source of where virus evolution occurs.

Tom Hart

A: This is incredibly hard to predict. At the moment it's everywhere, spreading and so there aren't any major conservation actions other than to let it run its course and to remove any other stressors to the population if possible.

Q: Is close proximity considered anything closer than 5m? Or how close is that defined as?

Tom Hart

A: Close proximity for previous infections in humans has been less than 1m, repeated exposure from poultry workers... So 5m is not a health issue for humans. But you would need to move away. The usual rule that '*If wildlife comes to you it's okay*' does not apply anymore.

Q: just to be clear for photographers, can people squat down to take photos and/or bend over with their camera at a low angle but not touching the ground with anything but their boot bottoms?

Lisa Kelley | IAATO

A: We are saying no squatting. We have seen people fall over time and time again when squatting and it makes it difficult to get up if wildlife is approaching.

Q: In the expected temperatures, how likely is airborne transmission at normal visitation distances? Is there any data on that temperature range?

Michelle Wille

A: Don't think this has been well addressed. For human cases, we generally find that people have been involving directly with infected birds. Sorry I can't answer this better.

Q: What about stranding equipment? it normally goes ashore, but since we are asking people to not put stuff on the ground...

Lisa Kelley | IAATO

A: We recommend that a tarp is down and the shore stranding equipment is put on that - then only one surface to clean.

Q: There will be a way to watch updates of the sites with HPAI cases during the season?

Lisa Kelley | IAATO

A: IAATO will be responsible for all of those communications to the Operators. And Meagan can also add information.

Meagan Dewar

A: The Antarctic Wildlife Health Network is setting up a database to record cases which people will be about to update and also we will be working with MAPPPD to display cases.

Jennifer Black - GSGSSI

A: For South Georgia updates will come via IAATO but they are also available on our website https://gov.gs/docsarchive/Environment/Biosecurity/Slte-resonse-level_live.pdf

Q: Regarding on shore emergency equipment and H5N1, are there any new procedures around this? I have read that no bags should be laid on the ground 'in the vicinity of wildlife' but nothing specific is mentioned. Wildlife does not always maintain the distance to safety equipment - are there any recommendations apart from thoroughly disinfecting?

Lisa Kelley | IAATO

A: You can put a tarp down and then the shore stranding equipment on top. This way only one surface to clean.

Q: Are we still talking about squatting or kneeling down in the vicinity of wildlife? Is it still ok in areas with no wildlife around?

Lisa Kelley | IAATO

A: Hi there, at sites with no wildlife (like Prospect or Portal Point) you can sit or kneel. At sites which have wildlife concentrations, including seals, no sitting, squatting, kneeling or laying down.

Q: Sorry, I just missed it - where exactly will the 10-knot speed limit be?

Lisa Kelley | IAATO

A: This will be around South Georgia. There are documents in the FOM which lay out the Geofenced areas in both the Peninsula and South Georgia (Section 8 and 13 respectively). The Speed restrictions are also depicted in the Live Ship Scheduler.