

Egg industry biosecurity measures and labelling changes in response to avian influenza



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Australian free range egg farmers are rolling out adjustments to labelling to communicate increased biosecurity measures being applied to protect free range egg farms from avian influenza.

“Since the detection of H5N1 avian influenza in Australia in June, state veterinary authorities have been providing recommendations for increased biosecurity measures including free range poultry to be temporarily housed indoors or enclosed” said Australian Eggs Managing Director, Rowan McMonnies.

“This is intended to limit interactions between laying hens and wild birds that are carrying the avian influenza virus, in turn reducing the risk of transmission.”

“The ACCC recognised the importance of the increased biosecurity measures in this period by stating that it would not take enforcement action for a period of 90 days so that egg farms had some time to make changes to their labels to reflect the housing status of their flocks. For some farms that period has ended and consumers can expect to see changes to free range pack labels from this week.”

“Some free range farms may decide to convert to barn production to reduce their overall biosecurity risk, but most remain committed to providing consumers with the option of free range eggs.”

“In response to the current increased biosecurity measures for free range poultry, there will be changes to free range egg labels or stickers placed on free range cartons to make it clear that flocks have been temporarily housed.”

“This will also be supported by signage in some stores explaining the situation and many egg farm websites will have further information on measures they’re taking to respond to current challenges.”

"It's not a situation that anyone wants but the threat of H5N1 avian influenza is here to stay. These biosecurity measures and labelling updates are being put in place to support the industry and the provision of secure staple protein source to the community."

"Fortunately, there have been no detections on egg farms to date. Eggs are safe to eat and egg supply remains unaffected with Australians consuming over 20 million every day."

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For more information on avian influenza and the current response visit www.agriculture.gov.au/campaigns/birdflu#h5_detection.

Media enquiries

Kelly Seagrave, Australian Eggs

Kelly.seagrave@australianeggs.org.au