



MEDIA RELEASE

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Pigeon fanciers urged to 'keep birds at home' as virus strikes interstate

Pigeon owners in South Australia have been urged to keep their birds at home and restrict any movement of birds in or out of the state as a paramyxovirus, previously unreported in Australia, is killing pigeons interstate.

Chief Veterinary Officer with Biosecurity SA, Dr Rob Rahaley, said today that while **there had been no reports of the virus in South Australian birds**, the fact that it had killed pigeons in north-western suburban Melbourne and in Shepparton in Victoria posed the potential for the virus being transmitted here.

"We're strongly advising any pigeon fanciers to cease movement of their birds in connection with their hobby until further notice," Dr Rahaley said.

"As virulent paramyxoviruses isolated from pigeons are capable of infecting poultry, we're also advising that producers should also take action to prevent any contact between poultry, turkeys, ratites (flightless birds such as emus and ostriches), with wild birds or pigeons, both indirectly and directly, for example via feed and water.

"Biosecurity SA will be monitoring closely the situation in Victoria and will investigate any reports we receive in this state of birds becoming ill."

Dr Rahaley said Victorian authorities were carrying out investigations to determine possible links between the properties where the virus has been killing birds. Affected pigeon flocks have experienced high mortality after displaying lethargy, gastrointestinal and neurological signs.

The Victorian properties where the virus has been found have been quarantined.

Dr Rahaley said there was always a risk that paramyxoviruses could be transmitted to humans and in certain cases it could cause mild conjunctivitis or 'flu-like' symptoms.

"However, the main priority is to prevent this disease occurring in birds in our state and that is why we're recommending that pigeon fanciers keep their birds at home and carry out good biosecurity practices as previously mentioned," he said.

"If you notice any unusual signs in your birds please contact your veterinarian or contact the Animal Disease Watch hotline on **1800 675 888** immediately. Biosecurity SA may assist with the cost of any investigations.

"Interstate authorities are also investigating vaccines to control this latest disease."



Government of South Australia

Biosecurity SA

The National Farm Biosecurity Manual for Poultry Production provides advice on biosecurity standards relevant to all avian industry sectors, and includes information on sound everyday biosecurity practices, and a range of useful resources and links.

The document is available on the Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) website at www.daff.gov.au/birds or hard copies can be obtained by contacting DAFF on (02) 6272 5283.

Information will also be posted on PIRSA's website at www.pir.sa.gov.au/biosecuritysa/animalhealth