

EAST ASIAN - AUSTRALASIAN FLYWAY PARTNERSHIP

Avian Disease Working Group

Terms of Reference

Background

Since late 2021 unprecedented highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) outbreaks have devastated many important seabird and waterbird sites and populations globally, and that recent strains of HPAI are seemingly endemic in some wild bird populations year-round, posing an increased and continuous threat to many wild bird populations.

The Avian Disease Working Group is formed to address the Decision Nine at the Eleventh Meeting of the Parties of the EAAFP in Brisbane, Australia in March 2023. The Working Group replaces the Avian Influenza Working Group formed in 2006 and expands the scope to cover other avian disease such as avian cholera and avian botulism (non-contagious) that can devastate a significant percentage of threatened birds.

Goal

To develop and disseminate relevant guidance on avian influenza and other avian diseases to Partners and Flyway Network Sites and support a long-term strategy to address the impacts of avian diseases on migratory seabirds and waterbirds in the East Asian Australasian Flyway

Role

The roles of the East Asian - Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) Avian Disease Working Group are to:

1. Facilitate exchange of information, knowledge and experience, and coordinate efforts aimed towards tackling avian diseases in the East Asian Australasian Flyway
2. Work with partners and relevant institutions to develop guidelines, action plans, conservation programmes and other recommendations on prevention and tackling avian diseases within the flyway.

3. Facilitate the development of a coordinated flyway-wide monitoring and surveillance programmes with a focus on migratory birds.
4. Support information exchange with international institutions on avian disease within the EAAF.

Scope

In principle the Working Group will cover all migratory seabirds and waterbird taxa and the geographic region as covered by the EAAFP but where appropriate, will seek opportunities for cooperation with relevant organizations and individuals in other flyways and regions

Membership

The Working Group membership will be comprised of representatives of EAAFP partners, species specialist groups with interest in the work of the Working Group, and representatives from relevant international bodies. There is no limit of number to the membership of the Working Group. All members are voluntary.

Working Group members are subdivided into the following groups:

- Core Group: members who will contribute more time and responsibility in formulating policies and implementation of decisions and plans, including advocacy to government agencies, connection with international bodies regarding avian diseases, and identification of funding. Ideally the core group consists of five to ten persons from a wide spectrum of backgrounds but can keep a close communication and make rapid responses. The Chair and coordinator(s) are mandatory members of the Core Group.
- Advisory Board: Providing technical advice to the Core Group but do not necessarily join all meetings and activities.
- Ordinary members: Maintaining an exchange of information with the coordinators and disseminate to a wider audience (Flyway Network Sites and WG/TF members, etc.) They will be invited to join meetings and activities relevant to their backgrounds (country, species group etc.).

Chairing and Coordination

The Avian Disease Working Group is administered by a Chair and one or more Coordinators. The Chair and Coordinators are designated by the Avian Disease Working Group and serve for a four-year term which may be renewed at the discretion of the Working Group members. The Chair is responsible for scheduling and facilitating meetings, preparing and distributing materials prior to meetings, and completing appropriate records of meetings. Materials and records are also provided to the Partnership, the Partnership Secretariat, and all attendees within 90 days of completed meetings. Meeting agendas are developed by the Chair in consultation with the Coordinators and other Core Group members. For tasks assigned to Coordinators, they will be responsible for coordinating activities, leading task meetings, collating information where necessary, and reporting results to responsible parties.

Meetings

The Core Group of the EAAF Avian Disease WG ideally will convene at least one meeting annually. The Chair, in consultation with the Core Group members, will determine the timing, method (face-to-face or teleconference), agenda and location of meetings. The EAAFP Secretariat is responsible for arranging logistical support for meetings. Hosting by an EAAFP Partner will be encouraged.

The Working Group will maintain an active and close discussion, by use of e-mail, internet communication, telephone and other traditional communication methods. All members will receive e-mail communication sent by the Chair and the coordinators.

Financing

The majority of the activities of the Working Group will be carried out voluntarily by its members. In selected cases where funding is needed, then sponsors will have to be found to cover the cost of the work.

In most cases, Working Group members will be expected to cover their own costs to attend meetings. The Chair of the Avian Disease Working Group will keep the EAAFP Secretariat and Financial Sub-Committee updated about its financial affairs