



**NORTHERN
TERRITORY
GOVERNMENT**

Centre for Disease Control

NT HEALTH

Surveillance Update

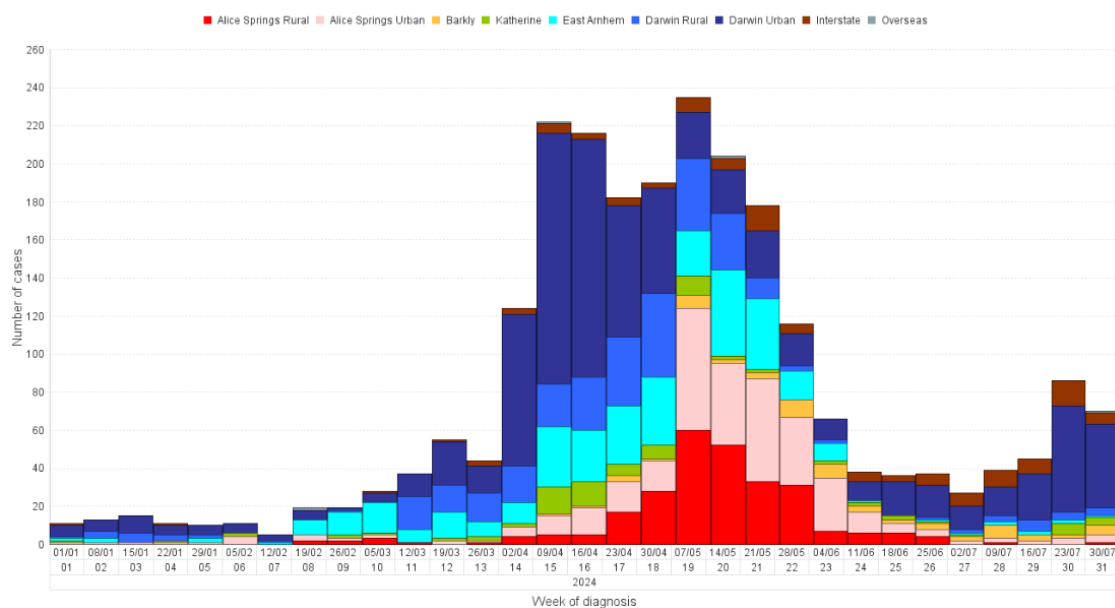
Issued: August 2024

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Influenza and the flu vaccine

- Influenza notifications in the NT have increased with over 150 notifications reported in the previous fortnight. The majority of recent notifications have been in the Darwin area with spread to other regions likely.
- There have been 2,389 cases this year (as at 6 August 2024) with 584 (24%) requiring hospitalisation.



- All people (≥ 6 months old) are recommended to have the annual vaccine. People at higher risk of influenza complications are eligible for FREE vaccination and these groups include:
 - all pregnant women (during any stage of pregnancy)
 - anyone 65 years of age and over
 - all children aged 6 months to <5 years
 - all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 6 months and over
 - people aged 6 months and over who have high risk medical conditions

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Public Health Division

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Crusted scabies

- The NT continues to experience high rates of crusted scabies. There have been 58 notifications year-to-date which is 44% higher than expected. Cases occur across the NT, with the highest rate occurring in the East Arnhem region.
- Scabies is an infestation of the skin with the *Sarcoptes scabiei* mite. When hyper-infestation occurs, the condition is known as crusted scabies (also called Norwegian scabies), and can involve thousands of mites over a person's body. Such cases easily spread scabies to others, and missed cases can lead to widespread transmission and recurrent infestation of residents in households or care facilities.
- A skin scraping for scabies microscopy and discussion with an infectious disease or dermatology specialist is required to confirm the diagnosis. It is recommended that all cases be referred to hospital for inpatient management. Please contact your local [CDC unit](#) as soon as you suspect the diagnosis of crusted scabies.
- It is important that all household contacts of the case are treated as per [Guidelines for Community Control of Scabies, Skin Sores, Tinea and Crusted Scabies in the Northern Territory](#)
- Further information and resources for the diagnosis and management of crusted scabies are available on the [Scabies and crusted scabies](#) webpage at NT Health.

Avian influenza

- Avian influenza or 'bird flu' is rare and is caused by strains of influenza A virus with the subtypes H5N1 and H7N9 the most frequently identified strains causing disease in humans. Avian influenza can affect a variety of animals which includes wild and domestic birds (particularly intensive farmed poultry) with some spill over infections into mammals such as cattle, and rarely to humans.
- There have been recent detections of H7 in Australian poultry farms. The national hen layer flock has been impacted in Victoria, NSW and ACT and this may lead to some disruption to egg supply that will impact the retail, hospitality and manufacturing sectors.
- A variant of H5N1, named clade 2.3.4.4b, causes significant illness and deaths in poultry, wild birds and some mammals and has spread rapidly across all continents except Australia. [It has recently been detected in dairy cattle and cats in the USA.](#) Infections in humans are rare and typically occur after close contact with sick birds and livestock. Person-to person transmission has not been reported.
- Avian influenza spreads by direct contact with infected birds or their saliva/faeces or from indirect contact through droplets or dust which contain virus. Those at higher risk of getting avian influenza are people who have travelled to [countries with avian influenza](#) and who have had contact with sick birds and other infected animals.
- [In countries where avian influenza occurs](#), people at highest risk of getting avian influenza are those who:
 - work with commercial poultry (chicken or turkey) and/or are in close contact with sick birds that may be infected with avian influenza
 - work with and/or are in close contact with other animal species that can be infected with avian influenza e.g. mammals, particularly if they are unwell
 - For more information on avian influenza visit [outbreak.gov.au](#)
 - If a clinician suspects AI in a person, please contact your nearest the CDC for advice.

This update was prepared by Anthony Draper (Senior Epidemiologist [OzFoodNet] Surveillance and Response Unit) and NT CDC staff. We encourage NT health staff to circulate this to their clinical colleagues.

Contact: View all CDC units NT wide at the [NT Health website](#)

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