



Blood on skin. Photo: DOC

H5 bird flu: Decontamination

What to do if you think you've been contaminated

e.g. your PPE failed in the field, such as a ripped or torn glove, a bird or other animal bit or tore through your PPE, improper application of PPE or you have been exposed to bodily fluids

1. Use alcohol gel

Clean hands with alcohol gel. Then apply further alcohol gel to any parts of your body which you think may have gotten affected. **Note that if the contamination is your eyes, or mouth we do not recommend applying alcohol gel to these areas, contact your health provider immediately (this is the Health New Zealand guidelines).**

2. Follow the doffing (removal) process for your PPE

This includes changing out of the clothes that you think may have also been contaminated.

Either have a change of clothes that you have in the car and change into those, put your contaminated clothes into a plastic bag, triple bag it, take it home and disinfect them. Doffing in the field is the absolute best.

If you have no other clothing options, put a set of Tyvek overalls over what you're currently wearing, and that's going to contain any contamination until you can get home. And once again, once home set up a doffing station, triple bag the disposable items, disinfect the re-useable items, and clean it up according to disinfection best practice

3. Reapply alcohol gel

Apply alcohol gel to your hands.

4. Disinfect clothing and equipment

After doffing, you will have a fish bin or similar container that has some gear and disinfectant in it. This should include your gumboots and re-useable overalls. Take it back to your clean-up area. Ensure that the necessary contact time for the disinfectant has been reached. If the disinfectant needs to be rinsed off, do this next, followed by drying and storing ready for future use. For items like overalls, which are made of material, or any other gear that can go in the washing machine, clean with a hot wash (40 degree Celsius) on the heavy duty/ soiled mode.

5. Shower

It's really important that when you finish doffing and disinfecting have a shower and wash your hair before you relax or back to the office. This is the final barrier to making sure that anything that may have possibly become contaminated during this process has all been washed clean.

If you feel unwell

Follow Health New Zealand guidelines. If you have handled sick or dead birds in the last 10 days and feel unwell you should contact your GP, hauora or healthcare provider.

If you have handled sick or dead birds or other animals with known avian influenza in the last 10 days, you should contact Healthline. If needed, Healthline can connect you with your public health service team who can support you by:

- providing information about avian influenza
- monitoring for symptoms
- arranging testing and antivirals, if needed.

Why does decontamination matter?

We want to avoid anyone becoming a “fomite” which is where someone has germs and they spread them to other places, people or animals.

We want to keep people safe and protect their health and safety while doing their work.