



Wildlife Health
AUSTRALIA



Sentinel Surveillance Program

Annual Report 2025

Wildlife Disease Surveillance in Australia

Australia has a **national system for wildlife disease surveillance** that is coordinated by Wildlife Health Australia (WHA).

This integrated system for reporting and data capture relies on **coordinated programs, focus groups and the central collation of data** into the national eWHIS database.

The **Sentinel Surveillance Program** is a WHA partnership with zoos, universities and veterinary clinics that connects wildlife professionals and captures wildlife disease information.

In 2025, the Sentinel Surveillance Program partners saw more than **70,600 wildlife cases** at their clinics.

General Surveillance Programs

- WHA State and Territory Coordinators & Environment Representatives
- Sentinel Surveillance Program
 - Zoos
 - Sentinel Clinics
 - Universities

Targeted surveillance & monitoring

- [Avian influenza in wild birds](#)
- Australian bat lyssavirus (ABLV) monitoring

Focus Groups

- Universities Focus Group
- [Bat Health Focus Group](#)

Electronic wildlife health information system (eWHIS)

- WHA administers the national database capturing information relating to wildlife health surveillance and disease investigations in Australia.
- More than 20,000 wildlife health events have been reported since the database was established.



Photo: Shana Ahmed

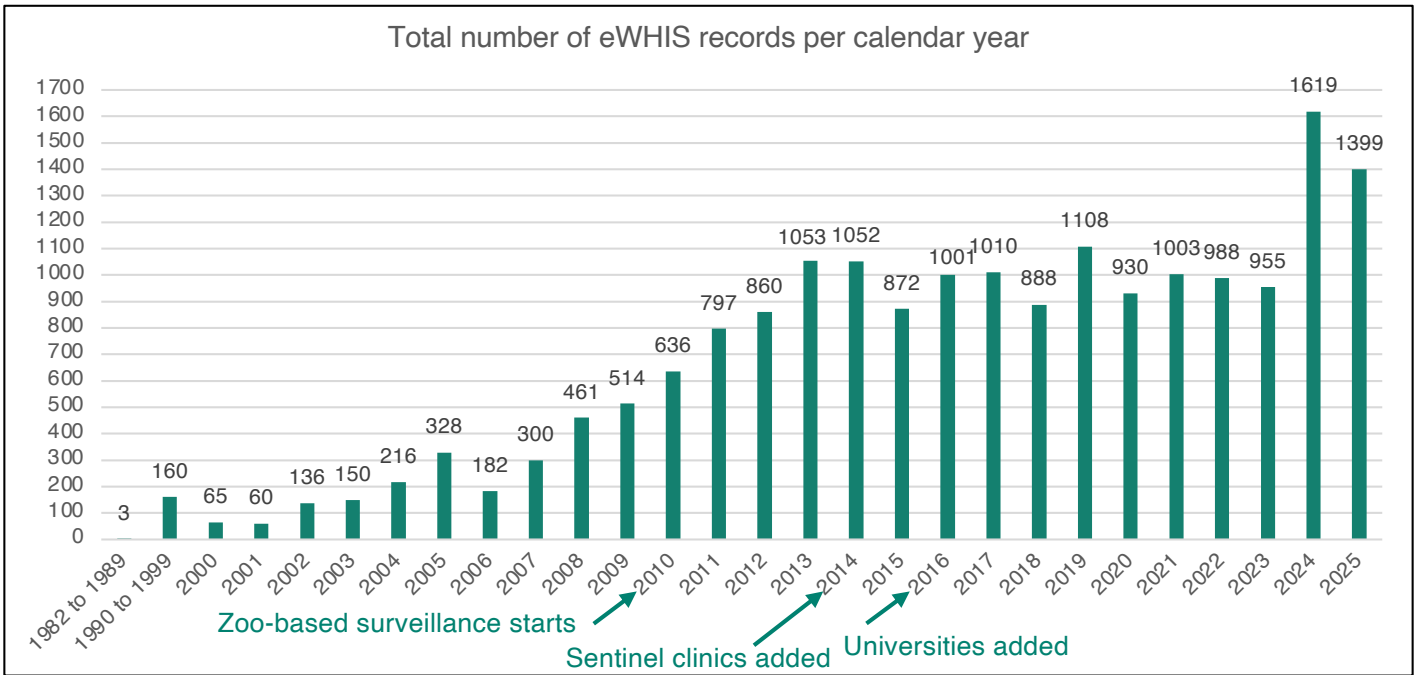
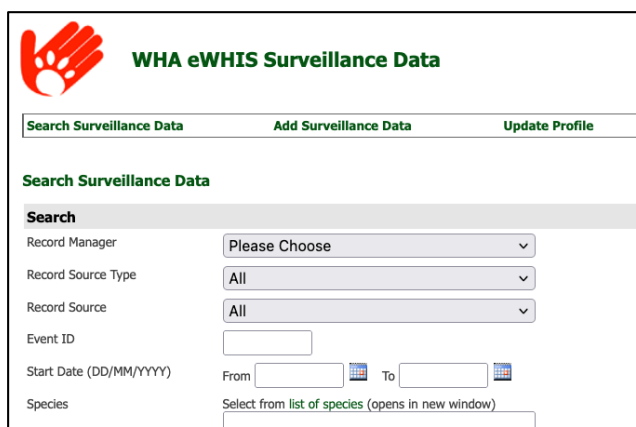


Contributing to the national database - eWHIS

What is eWHIS?

- The electronic Wildlife Health Information System ([eWHIS](#)) is the national database capturing information relating to wildlife health surveillance and disease investigations in Australia.
- Data is collected in eWHIS from the [WHA Coordinators and Environment Representatives](#), [Sentinel Surveillance partners](#), and targeted projects such as the [National Avian Influenza in Wild Birds Program](#) and [Australian bat lyssavirus](#) monitoring.
- Program participants enter cases directly into the eWHIS database.
- These entries make a valuable contribution to Australia’s wildlife health system and help us build an understanding of current wildlife disease trends and emerging issues.

Since the Sentinel Surveillance Program began, more than **5,800 events** have been reported to eWHIS from program participants.



Sentinel Surveillance Program: An Overview

- The wildlife disease Sentinel Surveillance Program grew from the successful **zoo-based** program established in 2010 ([Cox-Witton et al. 2014](#)) to include **veterinary clinics** from 2014 and **universities** from 2016.
- The program expanded to 10 zoos, 11 sentinel clinics and 7 universities by the end of 2025.
- WHA provides **funding** to each clinic or organisation for their participation.
- Sentinel veterinary clinics, zoos & universities enter data and participate in program activities including **quarterly teleconferences** chaired by WHA that provide opportunity for networking, connection and support across Australia.
- The program **improves linkages** between veterinary clinics, zoos, universities and **government agencies**.



2025 - Key achievements and developments

384 events reported to eWHIS through the program, contributing **27%** of the total eWHIS submissions for the year.

Participants saw more than **70,600** wildlife cases at their clinics.

RSPCA Wildlife Hospital Wacol (Qld) joined as a sentinel clinic expanding the program caseload and geographic reach.

10 disease investigations from the Sentinel Surveillance Program were funded through the [NSDI program](#).

WHA team members visited **5** program partners around the country establishing relationships and building networks.

20 coordinators received training or refresher training to use the eWHIS database.

Program partners contributed to **enhanced bird flu surveillance** in wild birds.

WHA launched our [Strategic Framework](#), with a vision of **healthy wildlife, healthy planet**; an ambitious roadmap to put wildlife health at the centre of a healthier future for all. The Sentinel Surveillance Program partners are trusted and essential contributors to achieving this vision.

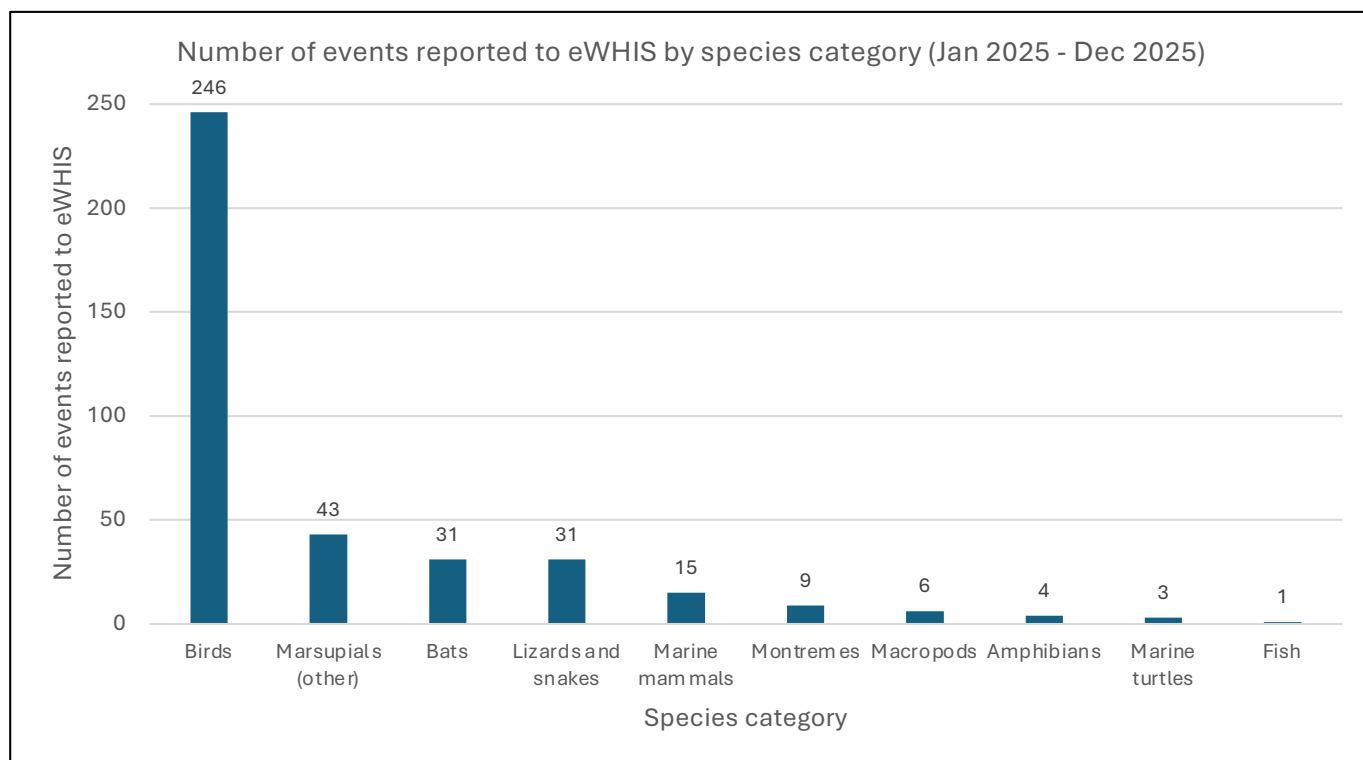


eWHIS Reporting - 2025 Summary:

- In 2025, 384 events were reported to the eWHIS national database by the Sentinel Surveillance Program participants.
- Sentinel Program entries have ranged annually from 87 to 583 since the program began in 2010.
- Most of the events involved free-ranging wildlife (89%).
- 85% of the eWHIS events reported through the program involved a single animal.

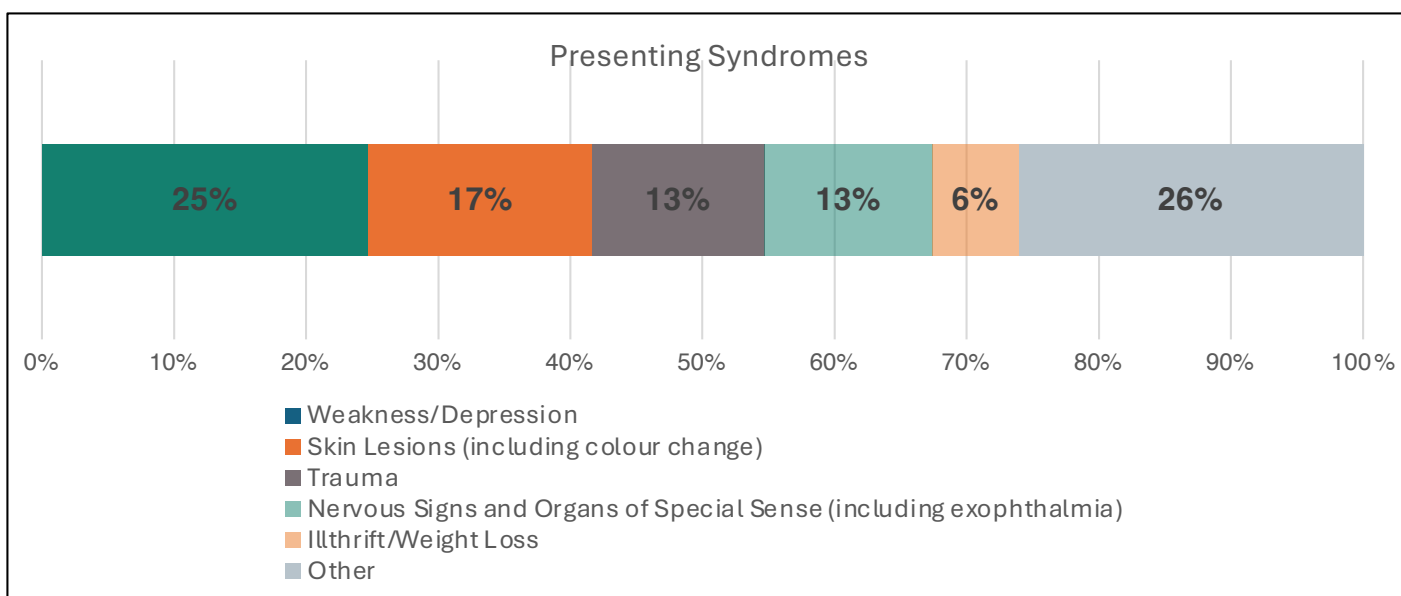
Species:

- Events involving more than **139 different species** were reported to eWHIS.
- Birds were the most frequently reported species (see chart below) followed by marsupials. This is consistent with 2024 where there was a spike in the number of bird reports related to enhanced surveillance for HPAI H5N1 (H5 bird flu). This trend continued in 2025.



eWHIS Reporting: Disease investigations

- Sentinel surveillance program participants undertake disease investigations in-house or through university, private or government laboratories.
- Participants can utilise the **National Significant Disease Investigation Fund**, which supported 10 disease investigations through the program in 2025.
- Program participants select cases for eWHIS entry based on **national priority areas** that include notifiable diseases, mass mortalities, public health and zoonotic diseases, poisoning events, or new and emerging diseases.
- The most common presentations for reported disease events were weakness/ depression and skin lesions.



- Testing was undertaken to exclude significant diseases including avian paramyxovirus, Australian bat lyssavirus, avian influenza viruses, morbillivirus and *Brucella*.
- [High pathogenicity avian influenza H5N1 \(H5 bird flu\)](#) has not been detected in Australia.
- The Sentinel Surveillance Program contributed to enhanced surveillance for this disease.
- Compared to 2021, the number of events with avian influenza exclusions in 2025 increased by 36% in the Sentinel Surveillance Program.

Examples of diagnoses reported through the program

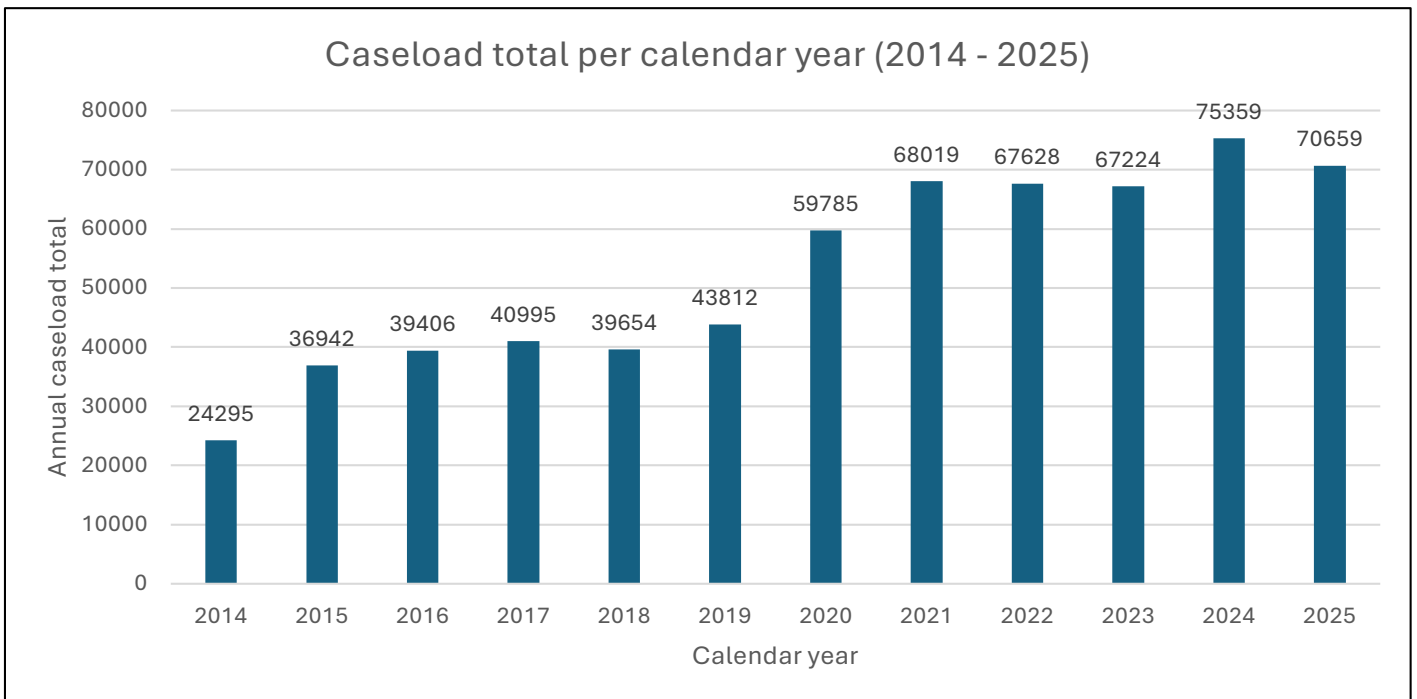
Botulism
Entanglement (e.g. fishing line/nets)
Chlamydia in koalas
Avian pox
Photosensitisation in swans
Sarcoptic mange in marsupials
Antimicrobial resistance
Fungal skin disease in reptiles



For more information on diseases that can affect Australian wildlife see WHA's [Fact Sheets](#).

Caseload data 2025:

- In addition to submitting wildlife health event information into eWHIS, Sentinel Surveillance Program participants also submit **monthly wildlife caseloads** totaling how many wildlife cases are seen per month by their organisation.
- In 2025, **70,659 wildlife cases** were seen by Sentinel Surveillance Program organisations highlighting a significant on-going surveillance effort.



- Of the wildlife cases seen, a majority were bird species, making up 60% of all cases. This is consistent with previous years.

Species group	Total caseload	Percentage of total caseload
Avian	34188	60.0%
Mammals	18276	32.1%
Reptiles	4322	7.6%
Amphibians	173	0.3%
Fish	28	0.0%



Utilisation of information from the Program

Information is used for:

- **Publications** including [Animal Health Surveillance Quarterly](#), [ABLV Bat Stats](#), [Wild Bird News](#) and WHA [Fact sheets](#).
- International **World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH)** reporting.
- **Annual report** on poisoning events to the APVMA.
- Data to inform EAD **outbreak** responses.
- Keeping **government** informed e.g. new disease findings.
- Data to inform disease risk assessments, research projects and publications via data access requests.

Data ownership:

- Ownership of data in eWHIS remains with the data submitter and WHA [Confidentiality Principles](#) & the [Data Management Policy](#) apply.
- Data submitters can select the level of confidentiality and access for each individual record.
- WHA seeks approval before release or publication of specific information.

YEAR	NSW	NT	QLD	VIC	WA	SA	Total
1995 - 2000	10	1	83 ^a	0	0	0	94
2001	0	0	9	1	4	0	14
2002	4	0	10	2	1	0	17
2003	5	0	3	2	0	0	10
2004	5	0	6	1	0	0	12
2005	6	0	5	0	0	0	11
2006	2	0	4	0	0	0	6
2007	6	0	2	0	0	0	8
2008	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2009	2	0	8	0	0	0	10
2010	0	0	8	0	1	0	9
2011	0	0	4	2	0	0	6
2012	1	0	3	0	0	1	5
2013	3	0	11	0	0	0	14
2014	5	1	14	1	11	0	32
2015	10	1	11	0	0	0	22
2016	5	1	8	1	0	0	15
2017	4	0	19	3	2	0	28
2018	5	0	5	1	0	0	11
2019	6	0	1	0	0	0	7
2020	5	0	9	4	0	0	18
							0
							2
							35
							0
							1
							12
							0
							5
							19
							0
							3
							8
							0
							0
							15
							19
							12
							438

Publications

PUBLICATIONS USING EWHIS DATA
WHA TEAM PUBLICATIONS
WILD BIRD REFERENCES

The following publications have used data recorded in the national electronic wildlife health information system (eWHIS):

- **Wildlife Health Australia reports** in Animal Health Surveillance Quarterly
- Knox et al (2025). **Making the most of mortalities: Novel host-parasite records in a sandy inland mouse (*Pseudomys hermannsburgensis*)**. *International Journal for Parasitology: Parasites and Wildlife*. doi: 101037
- Rowley et al (2024). **Broad-scale pesticide screening finds anticoagulant rodenticide and legacy pesticides in Australian frogs**. *Science of The Total Environment*. 930, 172526
- Phillip Island Nature Parks (2024). **Phillip Island (Mollw) Little Penguin (*Eudyptula minor*) Disease Risk Analysis**. University of Melbourne
- Cooke R et al (2022). **Widespread exposure of powerful owls to second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides in Australia spans an urban to agricultural and forest landscape**. *Science of The Total Environment*, 819, 153024

0	2	35
0	1	12
0	5	19
0	3	8
0	0	15
19	12	438

^a ACT and TAS have not defined when ABLV was first recognised in peak years of testing in



Further information and links

Reference:

- Cox-Witton K, Reiss A, Woods R, Grillo V, Baker RT, Blyde DJ, et al. (2014) Emerging Infectious Diseases in Free-Ranging Wildlife—Australian Zoo Based Wildlife Hospitals Contribute to National Surveillance. *PLoS ONE* 9(5): e95127. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0095127>

Other Resources:

- National Significant Disease Investigation Fund: www.wildlifehealthaustralia.com.au/Incidents/Disease-Investigation-Funding
- Sentinel Surveillance Program webpage: <https://wildlifehealthaustralia.com.au/Our-Work/Surveillance/Sentinel-Surveillance>
- WHA Coordinator contacts: <https://wildlifehealthaustralia.com.au/Incidents/WHA-Coordinator-Contacts>

WHA thanks all the veterinary clinics, zoos and universities in this program for their tireless work caring for and treating our native wildlife, and their valuable contributions to wildlife health surveillance.

We also thank **Animal Health Australia** for their management of the NSDI funding program and the **Zoo and Aquarium Association** for co-administering the zoo program.

Scan here to visit our website!

