H5N1 Bird Flu in Cuddalore: 35,000+ Birds Dead, 1-km Culling Zone

Prelims · 15 November 2026 · pcsmantra.com



Published: 15 November 2026Prelims: health

Original symbolic image: pcsmantra.com

15 November 2026: Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (H5N1) has been confirmed in chicken samples from a poultry farm at Kattiyankuppam village in Kurinjipadi taluk of Cuddalore district, Tamil Nadu. NIHSAD Bhopal on 13 November confirmed the virus in a carcass sample sent on 5 November; the administration has launched a containment operation.

The outbreak: numbers and timeline

First case: sudden mortality reported on 30 October from a farm at Thamanampatti village in Thiyagavalli panchayat.

The toll: 35,647 bird deaths in the affected belt till 13 November; 15 farms affected, of which 10 have been wiped out; 1,550 birds humanely culled so far; nine Rapid Response Teams deployed.

Testing chain: samples first went to PDDL Namakkal, then PDDL Erode and the Central University Laboratory (CUL) at Madhavaram, Chennai; final confirmation came from NIHSAD Bhopal.

The containment plan

Under the National Action Plan: the district has been divided into 'compartments'; culling of all birds at the epicentre farm and within a one-kilometre radius (Government of India guidelines, 2021); deep burial with bleaching powder and disinfection using VIRKON-S; movement of birds restricted; a three-month ban on restocking poultry in the affected area.

H5N1: background

The virus: a subtype of 'highly pathogenic avian influenza' (HPAI) - extremely contagious and lethal in birds; under public-health surveillance for its zoonotic (animal-to-human) potential.

NIHSAD: the National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases, Bhopal - an ICAR institute and the national referral centre for exotic and high-risk animal diseases.

For the exam

Questions can be asked on the definition of H5N1, the confirming institution (NIHSAD Bhopal, ICAR), the location (Cuddalore, Tamil Nadu), the culling protocol (1-km radius) and the concept of zoonosis.

Quiz: Test your knowledge

Q1: Consider the following about the avian influenza outbreak in Cuddalore: 1. The virus was confirmed by NIHSAD Bhopal. 2. NIHSAD is an ICAR institute. 3. The confirmed subtype is H9N2. How many are correct?

(a) Only one(b) Only two(c) All three(d) None

Answer and explanation: (b) Statements 1 and 2 are correct. Statement 3 is wrong - the confirmed subtype is H5N1 (highly pathogenic avian influenza).

Q2: Under the Government of India's 2021 guidelines, within what radius of the epicentre farm are birds culled?

(a) 500 metres(b) 1 kilometre(c) 5 kilometres(d) 10 kilometres

Answer and explanation: (b) All birds at the epicentre farm and within a 1-km radius are culled and disposed of in deep pits; a surveillance zone lies beyond it.

Mains Practice Question

Repeated avian influenza outbreaks underline the need for a 'One Health' approach. Evaluate India's animal-disease surveillance and response system. (Answer in 250 words - 15 marks)

Answer outline:

Introduction: The context - the confirmation of H5N1 in Cuddalore and the culling campaign.

Main body: The existing system - NIHSAD referral diagnosis, the national action plan, compartmentalisation, rapid response teams; weaknesses - delay in detection (30 October to 13 November), compensation, monitoring the informal poultry sector; One Health - integrating human-animal-environmental health, zoonotic risk.

Conclusion: Outbreak costs will fall only through early detection, compensation and institutionalising One Health.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

In short: H5N1 bird flu has been confirmed in poultry farms in Cuddalore (Tamil Nadu); over 35,000 birds have died and culling within a 1-km radius is under way.

Question: What is H5N1?

A subtype of highly pathogenic avian influenza - extremely contagious in birds; significant for public health because of its zoonotic (animal-to-human) potential.

Question: What does NIHSAD do?

An ICAR institute in Bhopal that is the national referral centre for high-risk animal diseases; it gave the final confirmation for the Cuddalore samples.

Question: What are the restrictions for farmers?

A three-month ban on restocking poultry in the affected area, restrictions on bird movement and an appeal to report unusual bird deaths immediately.

Sources:

- The Hindu: Avian influenza confirmed in Cuddalore; over 1,500 chickens culled, 14 November 2026
- New Indian Express: H5N1 bird flu confirmed in Cuddalore, 14 November 2026

PCSMANTRA.COM