

Media Release

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Warning for Lake Buloke

Local residents and visitors are being warned there is a suspected occurrence of botulism in the water birds at Lake Buloke.

Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) Regional Manager Environment and Natural Resources Aaron Gay said: "DELWP has been made aware of the death of a number of water birds at Lake Buloke."

"As the land manager of the lake, DELWP is working with the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (DEDJTR), Game Management Authority (GMA), Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) to resolve this issue and to ensure public safety is maintained.

"DELWP officers are also contacting local landholders as the situation develops," Mr Gay said.

"Although botulism is suspected as the likely cause of death on the basis of clinical signs observed, DEDJTR is currently analysing samples from the lake to exclude other avian diseases and determine the cause of death.

"DELWP is working on the appropriate course of action for management of the site.

DEDJTR Manager Veterinary Services, Dr Cameron Bell, said: "Even though there is minimal risk to humans, people in the Lake Buloke area are asked to not handle birds and fish that are obviously sick or found dead and to keep pets, especially dogs, away from the area to prevent them from eating potentially infected fish, birds or maggots."

"We are asking the public to report any instances of dying birds to DEDJTR on 136 186.

"The site where the birds are is not accessible to the general public," Dr Bell said.

Botulism in birds is a neuromuscular illness caused by a toxin produced by a naturally occurring bacterium *Clostridium botulinum*. Outbreaks occur when environmental conditions are favourable.

For more information on botulism in birds, visit <http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/pests-diseases-and-weeds/animal-diseases/general-livestock-diseases/avian-botulism>

Duck hunters can visit the Game Management Authority's website at www.gma.vic.gov.au for information about the suspected botulism at Lake Buloke.