H5N1 bird flu confirmed at a poultry farm in Cuddalore district

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News

The Tamil Nadu Animal Husbandry Department said highly pathogenic H5N1 bird flu was confirmed on 13 November 2026 at a poultry farm in Kattiyankuppam village, Krishnapuram panchayat, Kurinjipadi taluk, Cuddalore district. Sudden bird deaths began on 30 October at a farm in Thiyagavalli panchayat in the same taluk; by 13 November, 35,647 birds had died on farms in the area. Samples were first tested at the poultry disease diagnostic laboratory in Namakkal and sent on 5 November to the ICAR-National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases (NIHSAD), Bhopal. Following the Centre's 2021 action plan, culling of all birds on the infected farm and within a 1 km radius began; 1,550 birds were culled in the first phase. Dead birds are being buried in deep pits, farms disinfected and bird movement banned. The government said the infection is confined to one part of Cuddalore district, people need not panic, and unusual bird deaths should be reported to the nearest veterinary hospital.

Key facts for the exam

Point	Details
Place	Kattiyankuppam, Kurinjipadi taluk, Cuddalore district
Confirmed	13 Nov 2026 – H5N1 (highly pathogenic)
Deaths	35,647 birds (since 30 Oct)
Labs	Namakkal (first test); ICAR-NIHSAD, Bhopal (sent 5 Nov)

Point	Details
Culling	Farm + 1 km radius; 1,550 in first phase
Guideline	Centre's Avian Influenza Action Plan, 2021
First outbreak in India	2006
Virus	Influenza A (Orthomyxoviridae)

Background

- Science: bird flu is caused by Influenza A viruses (family Orthomyxoviridae). Subtypes such as H5N1 and H7N9 are named after two surface proteins – haemagglutinin (H) and neuraminidase (N). H helps the virus attach to cells; N helps new virus particles leave the cell. Wild waterfowl are natural carriers, and migratory birds can spread it.
- Institutions: ICAR-National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases (NIHSAD), Bhopal, under the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, is the national referral laboratory for avian influenza and confirms States' samples. DAHD, in the Union Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, framed an action plan in 2005 and revised it in 2006, 2012, 2015 and 2021.
- Law and history: avian influenza is a scheduled disease under the Prevention and Control of Infectious and Contagious Diseases in Animals Act, 2009, which provides for notifying the disease, declaring infected areas and restricting bird movement. India notified its first outbreak in 2006; it had declared freedom from the disease from 30 September 2020, but outbreaks have recurred since 2021.
- Economy: poultry is vital for rural income and protein supply. Outbreaks bring culling, export curbs and price falls; the Centre and States pay compensation for culled birds.

Tamil Nadu link: Namakkal district is India's egg-production hub; its poultry disease diagnostic laboratory first tested the Cuddalore samples. As Tamil Nadu is a major poultry State, surveillance has been stepped up to keep the infection from spreading beyond Cuddalore. In February 2026, more than 50 crows were found dead near Cuddalore town, after H5N1 had been confirmed in crows from Chennai and Salem; on 3 November 2026 Animal Husbandry Minister S. Kamali said the Namakkal laboratory had ruled out low-pathogenic avian influenza in the first Thiyagavalli samples.

Frequently asked questions

What is this news about?

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What are the key facts to remember for the exam?

Place: Kattiyankuppam, Kurinjipadi taluk, Cuddalore district; Confirmed: 13 Nov 2026 – H5N1 (highly pathogenic); Deaths: 35,647 birds (since 30 Oct); Labs: Namakkal (first test); ICAR-NIHSAD, Bhopal (sent 5 Nov).

What is the background to this news?

Science: bird flu is caused by Influenza A viruses (family Orthomyxoviridae). Subtypes such as H5N1 and H7N9 are named after two surface proteins – haemagglutinin (H) and neuraminidase (N). H helps the virus attach to cells; N helps new virus particles leave the cell.

Practice questions (with answers)

1. In the name 'H5N1', the letters H and N denote which two surface proteins of the virus?

A) Histone, Nucleoprotein

B) Haemagglutinin, Neuraminidase

C) Haemoglobin, Nitrogenase

D) Helicase, Nuclease

Answer: B – Explanation: Haemagglutinin helps the virus attach to cells; neuraminidase helps new virus leave the cell. Subtypes are named after them.

2. NIHSAD, Bhopal, the national referral laboratory for bird flu, functions under which body?

A) ICAR

B) ICMR

C) CSIR

D) DBT

Answer: A – Explanation: The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR). Human-disease labs come under ICMR (e.g. NIV, Pune).

3. Bird flu viruses such as H5N1 belong to which type of influenza virus?

A) Influenza B

B) Influenza C

C) Influenza D

D) Influenza A

Answer: D – Explanation: Influenza A – family Orthomyxoviridae; it infects many species, including birds, pigs and humans. Type B mostly infects humans only.

4. Livestock and poultry diseases, including bird flu, are scheduled notifiable diseases under which central Act?

A) Animal Cruelty Act 1960

B) Animal Diseases Act 2009

C) Epidemic Act 1897

D) Wild Life Act 1972

Answer: B – Explanation: The Prevention and Control of Infectious and Contagious Diseases in Animals Act, 2009 – it allows infected-area notices and movement curbs.

5. Which Tamil Nadu district, known as India's egg hub, has the poultry disease lab that first tested the Cuddalore samples?

A) Erode

B) Salem

C) Namakkal

D) Tiruppur

Answer: C – Explanation: Namakkal – the hub of layer poultry farms. For confirmation, samples were sent to NIHSAD, Bhopal, on 5 November.

Sources: Daily Thanthi; ETV Bharat Tamil; Dinamalar; DT Next; PIB (MoFAHD). © Shanmugam IAS Academy.