



## Gentoo Penguins

**For Prelims:** [H5N1 Avian Influenza Virus](#), Falkland Islands, [World Health Organisation \(WHO\)](#).

**For Mains:** Gentoo Penguin, Environmental pollution and degradation.

**Source:** [DTE](#)

### Why in News?

Recently, over 200 **Gentoo penguins** have been found dead in the **Falkland Islands, Antarctica** due to the spread of the [H5N1 Avian Influenza Virus](#).

- Falkland Islands is an archipelago in the South Atlantic Ocean.

### What is Avian Influenza?

#### ▪ About:

- Avian influenza, often referred to as **bird flu**, is a **highly contagious viral infection** that primarily affects birds, particularly wild birds and domestic poultry.
- In 1996, highly pathogenic avian influenza H5N1 virus was first identified in domestic waterfowl in Southern China. The virus is named A/goose/Guangdong/1/1996.

#### ▪ Transmission to Humans and Related Symptoms:

- Human cases of H5N1 avian influenza occur occasionally, but it is difficult to transmit the infection from person to person. As per [World Health Organisation \(WHO\)](#), when people do become infected, the mortality rate is about 60%.
  - It can range **from mild flu-like symptoms**, including fever, cough, and muscle aches, **to severe respiratory issues** like pneumonia, difficulty breathing, and even cognitive problems such as altered mental status and seizures.

#### ▪ Avian Influenza and India:

##### ◦ Initial Outbreak:

- The initial outbreak of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) H5N1 in India occurred in 2006 in Navapur, Nandurbar district, Maharashtra, and was followed by annual outbreaks.
- H5N8 was first observed in India in November 2016, mainly affecting wild birds across five states, with **Kerala reporting the most cases**.
- The disease has been reported in 24 states and union territories, resulting in the culling of over 9 million birds to control its spread.

##### ◦ Related Initiative:

- India's approach to **controlling Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI)** follows a **"detect and cull"** policy as outlined in the **National Action Plan for Prevention, Control, and Containment of Avian Influenza (revised - 2021)**.

#### ▪ Treatment:

- Antivirals have demonstrated effectiveness in the treatment of avian influenza virus infections in humans, lowering severity and the risk of death.

| Types  | A Subtypes  | HPAI vs LPAI   |
|--|---|--|
| <b>Influenza A</b><br>(Infects a wide range of animals including birds)          | Avian<br>(Can infect humans)<br>H5N1<br>H7N3<br>H7N7<br>H7N9<br>H9N2<br>H10N8 | HPAI H5N1<br>LPAI H5N1<br>HPAI H5N8<br>LPAI H5N8   |
| <b>Influenza B</b><br>(Mainly infects humans)                                    | Swine<br>(Can infect humans)<br>H1N1<br>H1N2<br>H3N2                          | Subtypes can be classified as high path or low path based on the ability of the specific virus strain to kill chickens in the lab setting. |
| <b>Influenza C</b><br>(Infects humans and pigs but more rare than types A and B) | Most common human<br>H1N1<br>H3N2   |  |
| <b>Influenza D</b><br>(Infects cattle)   |   |  |

- **HPAI stands for Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza and LPAI stands for Low Pathogenic Avian Influenza.**

## What are the Key Facts About Gentoo Penguins?

- **Scientific Name: Pygoscelis papua**
- **About:**
  - They are characterized by a **band of white feathers extending across** the top of the head from just above each eye.
  - Other **distinguishing features include a black throat, a brush tail** that is large in comparison with other penguin species, and a bill that is mostly deep orange or red.
- **Distribution:**
  - They are exclusively **located in the Southern Hemisphere**, primarily found on the Antarctic Peninsula and numerous sub-Antarctic islands, with a notable concentration in the **Falkland Islands in the South Atlantic Ocean.**
- **Habitat:**
  - These penguins are typically **situated along shorelines**, allowing for quick **access to food sources while staying in proximity to their nests.** This strategic positioning facilitates efficient foraging and nesting activities.
- **Threats:**
  - **Predators:** Vulnerable to predation by South American **sea lions, Weddell seals, leopard seals, killer whales**, skuas, sheathbills, caracaras, and giant fulmars.
  - **Human Impact:** Historical practices such as **egg collection** for supplementation, and harvesting of skins and blubber.
  - **Environmental Changes:** Changing environmental conditions and competition with humans for prey, potentially impact population sizes.
- **Conservation Status:**
  - **IUCN Red List:** Least Concern.

## What are the Key Facts About the Falkland Islands?

- **Location:** The Falkland Islands are a **British Overseas Territory located in the South Atlantic Ocean.** They are about 500 km east of the coast of Argentina.
  - Stanley is the capital and largest city of the Falkland Islands.
- **Territorial Status:** The Falkland Islands are a British Overseas Territory, but **Argentina also claims sovereignty over the islands**, leading to a historical conflict between the two countries.

E.g. **1982 War between Argentina and British forces** over the territory of the Falkland Islands.

- **English is the official language.**

- **Wildlife:** The Falkland Islands are **home to diverse wildlife**, including various species of **birds, seals, and penguins**. The islands are known for their large colonies of penguins, such as the King Penguin and the Magellanic Penguin.



### UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

**Q. H1N1 virus is sometimes mentioned in the news with reference to which one of the following diseases? (2015)**

- (a) AIDS
- (b) Bird flu
- (c) Dengue
- (d) Swine flu

**Ans: (d)**

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