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ACCC publishes free-range labelling guidance for poultry industries

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The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) has released guidance on the labelling of poultry eggs and meat as â??free rangeâ?? in the event of an outbreak of the deadly avian influenza H5N1 in Australia.

In case of a declared H5N1 outbreak, poultry producers may be required by government regulations to house their animals indoors to prevent further spread, including to native birds. The relevant Commonwealth, State and Territory Chief Veterinary Officers will determine these' housing orders'.

Under the ACCC guidance, egg and poultry meat producers affected by an H5N1 government housing order can continue selling their products with â??free rangeâ?? labelling for up to 90 days during a declared outbreak without risk of enforcement action by the ACCC.

The ACCC guidance is not limited to chicken egg and meat producers and is intended to apply to the broader poultry and meat industries.

â??Our approach provides certainty to poultry egg and meat producers that during an initial period after housing orders come into effect, they will not face ACCC enforcement action for labelling products as â??free rangeâ?? while they deal with the immediate threat of H5N1,â?• ACCC Deputy Chair Mick Keogh said.