



2024–25 Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) and Other Wildlife Diseases Handbook



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Section 1.

2024–25 Operational Must Knows of HPAI

Three (3) or more animals deceased within general close proximity are cause for concern and to abort a landing. Take note of posture of carcass (body at odd angles, lack of outward wounds), which may indicate animals are affected and should raise concern.

Staff and visitors must stay more than 5m/15ft from all live wildlife and 10m/33ft from carcasses. Recommend 10m/33ft from symptomatic individuals.

- Make sure guests are prepared for disruption to planned voyage activities due to HPAI before they leave home
- Ensure biosecurity procedures are carried out to the **highest level daily**, between sites and regions (particularly in South Georgia and Antarctica)
 - Onboard the vessels, it is imperative ALL organic material is removed from boots and other equipment before Virkon[®] S (or equivalent) is applied
 - Best practice is to dip footwear both when exiting and returning to the vessel
 - Make sure auxiliary craft and landed gear are cleaned between landings/activities
 - Large tarps recommended to place shore stranding equipment upon
- A Pre-Landing Assessment MUST be carried out prior to any landing/site visitation – minimum 30 minutes (combined water and land assessment when applicable)
- 5m/15ft distance MUST be maintained from live Antarctic Wildlife
- 10m/33ft distance MUST be maintained from carcasses and symptomatic animals
- Never pick up/handle dead wildlife
 - Do not walk through water in which a carcass is laying, or downstream of one
- Do not lie down, kneel/crouch, or sit at sites with wildlife
 - Do not use stool-chairs or chairs during vessel landings
- Report suspected cases to your EL, IAATO, and home office immediately. (See report form in FOM Section 02 and Appendix 4)
 - Anything that causes discussion should be reported
 - Animals can still be infected and not show symptoms
 - Take photos and videos along with GPS coordinates to record what you saw and support further investigations
- Operators must create standard operational procedures (SOPS) for birds landing on deck and/or bird excrement on deck
- Operators must create specific SOPs for scientists they are working with. Operators are responsible for sharing their internal SOPs with appropriate personnel
 - Scientists should provide briefing to all staff related to project/fieldwork and make permits available

WHEN IN DOUBT DO NOT LAND

Section 2.

Biosecurity for Wildlife Diseases

The following actions should be followed for the 2024-25 season and are in addition to IAATO's standard biosecurity procedures. They do not replace domestic governmental regulations and are subject to change pending advice from experts.

Supporting Document in FOM Section 02: 2024-25 IAATO Biosecurity Instructions

Decontamination between Regions:

- A thorough biosecurity decontamination **MUST** be done between ALL gateways, the interior of Antarctica and maritime regions (including but not limited to the Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas), South Georgia, the Antarctic Peninsula, and Ross Sea)
- Onboard the vessels, it is imperative ALL organic material is removed from boots and other equipment between landings before Virkon® S (or equivalent) is applied
 - This may involve extra staff to help clean any organic material (mud, faeces) off passenger clothing
 - Staff and Crew directly involved in cleaning organic material should wear appropriate PPE
- Best practice at this time is to treat footwear and equipment with biocide on exit and entry to the vessel
- Never touch animals, dead or alive, unless you have a permit that specifically includes wildlife with suspected disease
- ALWAYS keep at least 5m/15ft from healthy wildlife
 - If a landing cannot be made without keeping at least 5m/15ft from groups of wildlife, the landing should be aborted
 - If wildlife chooses to approach people, take appropriate action to ensure the minimum distance of 5m/15ft is maintained where it can be safely done so
- 10m/33ft distance must be maintained from carcasses and symptomatic animals
 - It may be worth setting an exclusion zone with flags, ropes or cones while performing the pre-landing assessment
- Never pick up/handle dead wildlife
 - Do not walk through water in which a carcass is laying, or downstream of one
- Do not lie down, kneel/crouch, or sit at sites with wildlife
 - Do not use stool-chairs or chairs during vessel landings
- Do not leave any equipment or packs on the bare ground or snow, close to animal activity or faecal matter
 - A tarp is acceptable to store shore-stranding equipment on
 - Tarps, landing gear, camping equipment must all be cleaned and disinfected

Other Considerations:

- The 2024-25 list of camping sites focused on areas without wildlife can be found in FOM Section 02 and Appendix 1
 - This list may not cover all the camping sites ever used; if an Operator has another site they would like to use, it is permissible as long as HPAI and Wildlife Disease Protocols are followed
- Do not bum slide at sites with wildlife. Bum sliding, like camping, should only be done at sites without wildlife
- Operators supporting researchers who are authorised or permitted to be in direct or close contact (less than 5m/15ft) with animals should ensure the researchers are aware of the latest advice for mitigating transmission of wildlife disease
 - Operators must have standard operational procedures (SOPs) with onboard scientists
 - Scientists should share their protocols and permitted activity with Staff, Crew and Guests
- Where staff must handle seabirds strikes, appropriate PPE must be worn including face masks and gloves
 - Staff should follow their Operator SOP on using PPE and protocols on bird strikes
 - Operators should ensure this equipment is available for staff if operating in areas where seabirds are at risk of landing on ships

Section 3.

Pre-Landing Assessment for Wildlife Diseases

Three (3) or more animals deceased within general close proximity are cause for concern and to abort a landing. Take note of posture of carcass (body at odd angles, lack of outward wounds), which may indicate single animals who are affected and should raise concern.

Staff and visitors must stay more than 5m/15ft from all live wildlife and 10m/33ft from carcasses. Recommend 10m/33ft from symptomatic individuals.

*Also see Appendix 2 and 3 for Visual Guides to the Pre-Landing Assessment

Different species have different levels of susceptibility to the disease. While we are still learning about symptoms in Antarctic wildlife, we can assume that clinical signs reported in mammals and seabirds in other areas of the world may be exhibited in Antarctica.

Experienced ornithologists, marine mammal specialists, guides, naturalists and researchers will be especially adept at spotting atypical behaviour in wildlife and should be integrated into a site evaluation prior to any visit. They can also assess if the numbers of dead or sick wildlife differ from what is anticipated for the time of year (e.g. normal chick mortality), site (number of affected animals relative to the local population size) or season (e.g. if food availability is expected to be low).

The following information is a guide, although some animals may show no symptoms.. In an outbreak, it would be expected that several of these signs could be exhibited by different individuals:

- Neurological signs:
 - Walking or swimming in circles
 - Stumbling or walking without coordination (frequently reported in Great Skuas)
 - Abnormal posture, such as wings outstretched and hyperextension of the neck (reported in Sandwich terns)
 - Severe backward arching of head, neck and/or spine
 - Tremors and seizures (frequently reported in Humboldt penguins and South American sea lions)
 - Partial paralysis and difficulties in locomotion (reported in sea lions in Chile and Argentina)
 - Severe drooping of neck
- Other:
 - Experts in South Africa report that sick penguins look sick – hunched over, depressed, lethargic
 - Respiratory distress; Rapid breathing, mouth breathing, coughing sounds, sneezing, gurgling, rattling
 - Specifically in sealions: excessive nasal discharge, conjunctivitis and/or drooling
 - Specifically in eyes of seabirds, including penguins: crusty, droopy, cloudy eyes. Excessive eye watering. Redness and inflammation (conjunctivitis). Repetitive, uncontrolled eye movement
 - Unusual, sudden and rapid increase in the number of animals found dead between site visits
 - Close grouping of dead animals

Do not enter colonies and abort a visit if signs of HPAI or other wildlife disease are seen or suspected

Do not collect or touch dead, sick or dying wildlife

Follow enhanced biosecurity measures for any equipment at a suspected site

Section 4.

Response to a Suspected Wildlife Disease

*Also see Reporting Form in Appendix 4 and FOM Section 2

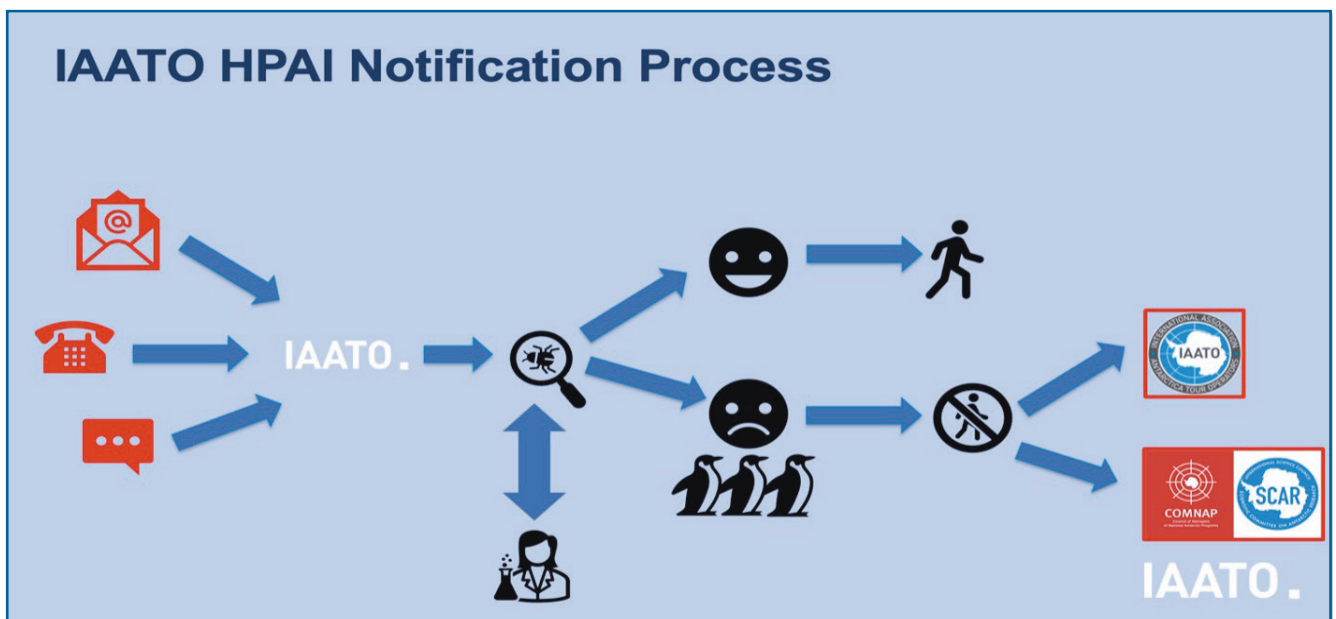
We are still learning about HPAI and other wildlife disease symptoms, and any concerning behaviour should be reported. Additionally, animals can be asymptomatic and still be infected, and it is important to consider it may be at all landings.

If an HPAI is suspected:

1. Expedition Leader (EL) is the first point of contact and should be told first if HPAI is suspected
2. EL to contact IAATO **IMMEDIATELY** via shipscheduler@iaato.org, operations@iaato.org or the Emergency number (IAATO will contact relevant stakeholders nearby)
3. In the first instance even a short email saying you have a concern will do so the rest of the fleet can be notified, and no one will be caught unaware
4. After this the longer report form can be submitted. (See Appendix 4 for full report form)
5. EL contact Operator Home Office
6. IAATO will notify all Operators of the status of a site after a report: this could include asking for raised awareness with the site still open, a 48 hour closure for further assessment, or a longer closure. All decisions will be made in coordination with SCAR and other expert advice

The home office should contact the Operator's National Competent Authority; however it is important to note IAATO will also contact the Antarctic Stakeholders.

The below image is a graphical representation of the reporting process and IAATO's interaction with SCAR and other scientific experts when a report is submitted.



Do not enter colonies and abort a visit if signs of HPAI or other wildlife disease are seen or suspected

Do not collect or touch dead, sick or dying wildlife

Follow enhanced biosecurity measures for any equipment at a suspected site



Appendix 1.

2024–25 Camping Sites

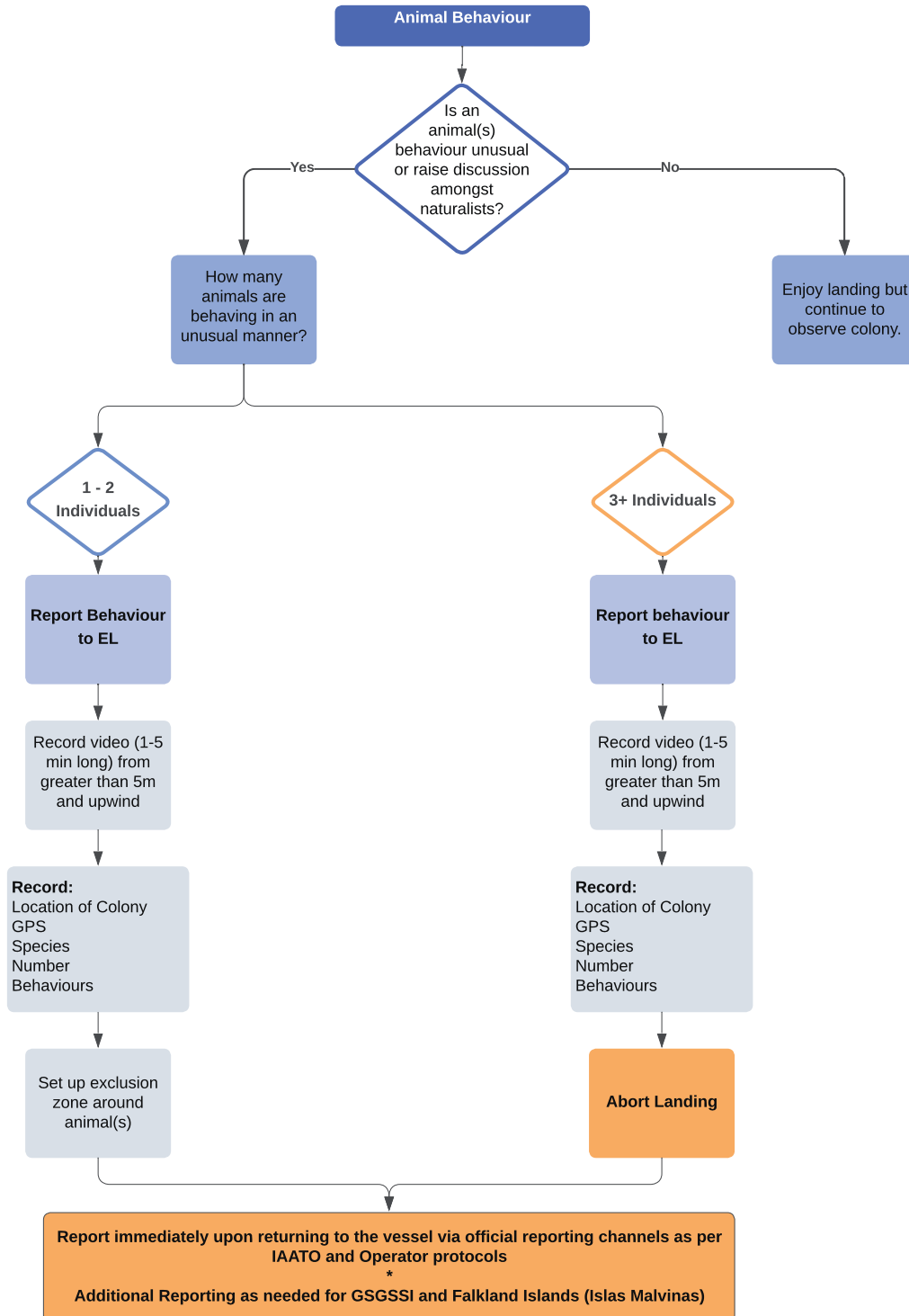
Historical Camping Sites	Latitude	Longitude	Special Notes
Brown Station	64°51'S	62°54'W	Camping at Brown Station is not allowed at any time regardless of HPAI
Damoy Point	64°49'S	63°32'W	The open area around the hut may be appropriate.
Danco Island	64°44'S	62°37'W	
Doumer Island	64°51'S	63°35'W	
Enterprise Island	64°32'S	62°0'W	
Hovgaard Island	65°8'S	64°8'W	
Jenny Island	67°44'S	68°24'W	
Jougla Point	64° 49' 60" S	63° 30' 0" W	
Lefèvre-Utile Point	64°50'S	63°31'W	
Leith Cove	64°52'S	62°50'W	
Lystad Bay	67°50'S	67°17'W	
Meusnier Point	64°32'S	61°37'W	Shag colonies and possible hauled out seals may not allow camping.
Orne Islands	64°40'S	62°40'W	
Petermann Island	65°10'S	64°10'W	
Pleneau Island	65°6'S	64°4'W	Southern end only
Portal Point	64°30'S	61°46'W	
Punta Vidt	64°53'38.17"S	62°51'40.17"W	A good alternative to Brown Station, although seals hauled out may not allow camping.
Recess Cove	64°30'S	61°32'W	
Ronge Island/Kerr Point	64°42'S	62°37'58"W	Seals hauled out may not allow camping.
Skontorp Cove	64°54'S	62°52'W	
Stonington Island	68°11'S	67°0'W	Per USA, camping is not allowed.
Stony Point	64°54'47"S	62°55'59"W	
Vega Island	63°50'S	57°25'W	
Winter Island	65°15'S	64°16'W	Many bird colonies scattered throughout the Argentine Islands.

Color Key

	Not appropriate for Short Overnight Stays with heightened HPAI concerns.
	Short Overnight stays should proceed only in areas away from penguin colonies and hauled out pinnipeds.
	Camping OK while following HPAI Protocols or site guidelines

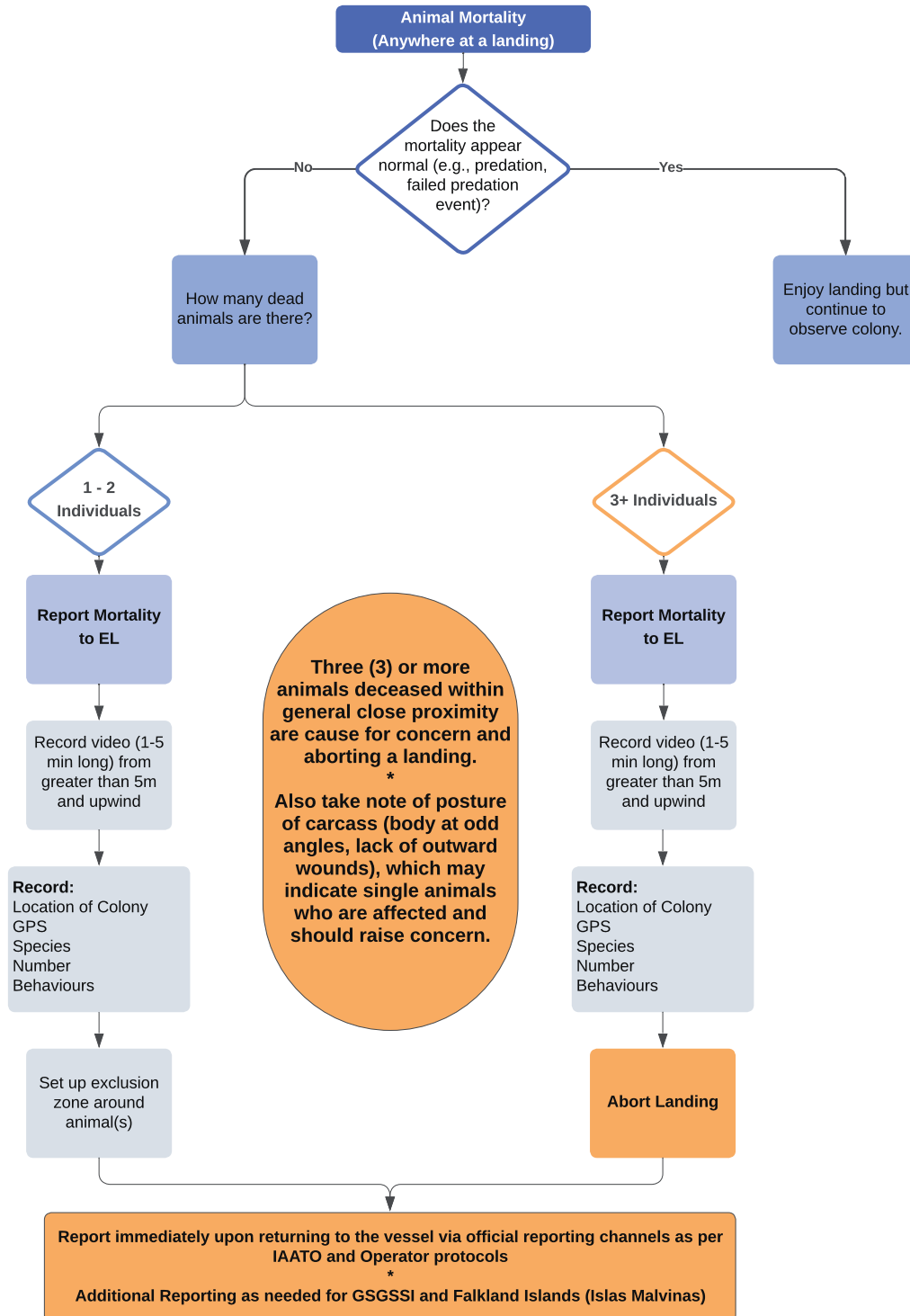


Appendix 2. 2024–25 Pre-Landing Assessment Protocol for Concerning Animal Behaviour





Appendix 3. 2024–25 Pre-Landing Assessment Protocol for Animal Mortality





Appendix 4.

Suspected HPAI and Wildlife Disease Reporting Form

Report for concerning behaviour or mortality (HPAI or other diseases) in wild birds and mammals

Videos of animal behaviour are essential

Three (3) or more animals deceased within general close proximity are cause for concern and aborting a landing. Take note of posture of carcass (body at odd angles, lack of outward wounds), which may indicate single animals who are affected and should raise concern.

Staff and visitors must stay more than 5m/15ft from all live wildlife and 10m/33ft from carcasses. Recommend 10m/33ft from symptomatic individuals.

Name of reporter Name of Operator and Vessel	
Contact details	
Site name	
Site description (lat/long (GPS preferred), extent of affected area, habitat type)	
Date of visit TIME OF REPORT (UTC)	
Length of observation period	
Documented Behaviour	
Species affected	
Approximate number of animals (per species / life stage)	
Description and number of any symptomatic animals (behaviours etc)	
Mortality Report	
Species affected	
Approximate number of animals (per species / life stage)	
Were the animals in close proximity	
Estimation/description of time since death i.e. fresh, skeletal remains only, mixture	
Estimation of what proportion of animals were affected	
Photos / video (as attachment) (yes/no)	
Any additional relevant information (environmental conditions etc)	

Did you abort landing?	Yes	No
Please give details		

Please return to shipscheduler@iaato.org or operations@iaato.org
Reports should be submitted as soon as practical, ideally within 24 hours.

For larger files, if WhatsApp is easier, please send files to +17169073501