

Avian influenza (bird flu) identified at Cheshire broiler breeder rearing unit

Avian influenza of the H5N8 strain was confirmed at a premises near Frodsham in Cheshire on Monday 2 November.

Testing today (Tuesday 3 November) has confirmed this is a highly pathogenic strain related to the virus currently circulating in Europe.

All 13,500 birds at the farm will be humanely culled to limit the spread of the disease. A 3km Protection Zone and a 10km Surveillance Zone have been put in place around the infected site to limit the risk of the disease spreading.

This case is unrelated to the H5N2 strain which was confirmed in at a [small commercial premises near Deal in Kent on Monday](#).

Public Health England (PHE) advises that the risk to public health from the virus is very low and the Food Standards Agency advises that avian influenzas pose a very low food safety risk for UK consumers. Properly cooked poultry and poultry products, including eggs, are safe to eat.

Chief Veterinary Officer, Christine Middlemiss, said:

Avian flu has been confirmed at a commercial broiler breeder rearing farm near Frodsham in Cheshire. Immediate steps have been taken to limit the risk of the disease spreading and all remaining poultry at the farm will be culled.

Public Health England has confirmed that the risk to public health is very low and the Food Standards Agency advises that bird flu poses a very low food safety risk for UK consumers.

Bird keepers should remain alert for any signs of disease, report suspected disease immediately and ensure they are maintaining good biosecurity on their premises.

We are urgently looking for any evidence of disease spread associated with this farm to control and eliminate it.

Dr Gavin Dabrera, Consultant in Acute Respiratory Infections at PHE said:

There have never been any confirmed cases of H5N8 in humans and the risk to public health is considered very low.

We continue to work closely with Defra throughout this

investigation.

A Food Standards Agency spokesperson said:

We advise that, on the basis of the current scientific evidence, avian influenzas pose a very low food safety risk for UK consumers.

Properly cooked poultry and poultry products, including eggs, remain safe to eat.

A detailed investigation is in progress to determine the most likely source of this outbreak.

Wild birds migrating from mainland Europe during the winter period can spread the disease to poultry and other captive birds. There are some simple measures that all poultry keepers, whether they are running a large commercial farm, keeping a few hens in their back garden, or rearing game birds, should take to protect their birds against the threat of avian flu.

These include:

- Keeping the area where birds live clean and tidy, controlling rats and mice and regularly cleansing and disinfecting any hard surfaces
- Cleaning footwear before and after visits
- Placing birds' feed and water in fully enclosed areas that are protected from wild birds, and removing any spilled feed regularly
- Putting fencing around outdoor areas where birds are allowed and limiting their access to ponds or areas visited by wild waterfowl
- Where possible, avoid keeping ducks and geese with other poultry species.

Further information on how to [help prevent the spread of the disease can be found on gov.uk](#).