

Avian Influenza: Poultry keepers advised to remain vigilant as heightened biosecurity measures lifted

The Chief Veterinary Officers from England, Scotland and Wales are advising poultry keepers to remain vigilant as the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ) is due to be lifted from midday tomorrow (Saturday 15 May).

These additional biosecurity measures, which were introduced across Great Britain in November 2020, have been vital in protecting flocks across the country from the disease which is circulating in wild birds.

Defra, the Scottish Government and the Welsh Government have been working closely with industry and bird keepers to ensure that there are strict biosecurity measures in and around poultry premises to help keep flocks safe.

The risk of bird flu in poultry with good biosecurity has now been reduced to 'low' for all poultry. As a result, the mandatory enhanced biosecurity requirements that were brought in as part of the AIPZ on 11 November and the additional biosecurity measures introduced on 31 March will be lifted from midday on Saturday 15 May.

In a joint statement, Great Britain's three Chief Veterinary Officers said:

This will be welcome news for bird keepers across the country who have put great effort into keeping their flocks safe this winter.

We have taken swift action to contain and eliminate this disease, and we urge all bird keepers – whether they have just a few birds or thousands – to continue to do their bit to maintain strict biosecurity measures on their premises, so that we do not lose the progress that we have made over the past few months. Low risk does not mean no risk.

All poultry and bird gatherings, including pigeon gatherings organised for races from mainland Europe, will also be permitted, provided organisers notify the Animal and Plant Health Agency at least seven days before the event takes place and that they comply with the provisions of the new General Licence.

Public health advice is that the risk to human health from the H5N8 virus strain is low and from the H5N2, H5N5 and H5N1 virus strains is very low. Food standards bodies also advise that avian influenza poses a very low food safety risk for UK consumers and does not affect the consumption of poultry products, including eggs.

Poultry and captive bird keepers are advised to remain vigilant for any signs of disease in their birds and any wild birds, and seek prompt advice from their vet if they have any concerns. They can help prevent avian flu by maintaining good biosecurity on their premises, including:

- Fencing off ponds, streams, boggy areas or standing water and draining them where possible
- Netting or covering ponds
- Removing any wild bird feed sources
- Deterring wild birds by regularly walking through the area or by using predator decoys
- Cleansing and disinfecting concrete or other permeable areas
- Putting down wood shavings in wet areas
- Limiting the number of people who come onto the site
- Using disinfectant foot dips when entering and exiting enclosures or houses

Poultry and captive bird keepers and members of the public should continue to report dead wild birds to the Defra helpline on 03459 33 55 77 (option 7), and keepers should report suspicion of disease to APHA in England on 03000 200 301, Wales on 0300 3038268 and in Scotland through the [Local Field Service Office](#).

Poultry keepers should familiarise themselves with our [avian flu advice](#).

Further information

- Avian influenza is in no way connected to the COVID-19 pandemic, which is caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus and is not carried in poultry.
- The government's outbreak assessment following recent cases in England can be accessed [here](#).
- For more advice and regular updates on the latest situation, visit Governments' avian flu pages: in [England](#), [Scotland](#), [Wales](#) and [NI](#).
- Food safety advice for cooking poultry and eggs remains unchanged. See NHS [advice on safe cooking of eggs](#) and [poultry](#).
- We publish a report (updated regularly) on findings of highly pathogenic avian influenza (bird flu) in wild birds in Great Britain [available here](#), and further information on avian influenza findings in wild birds in GB and Europe can be found in our [outbreak assessments](#).
- Avian influenza is in no way connected to the COVID-19 pandemic which is caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus which is not carried in poultry.
- The government's outbreak assessment following recent cases in England can be accessed [here](#).
- Further details of the new requirements that apply as part of the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone can be found [here](#).
- For more advice and regular updates on the latest situation, visit Governments' avian flu pages: in [England](#), [Scotland](#), [Wales](#) and [NI](#).
- Food safety advice for cooking poultry and eggs remains unchanged. See NHS [advice on safe cooking of eggs](#) and [poultry](#).
- Public Health England (PHE) has reviewed information from the World

Health Organisation (WHO), following the reports of H5N8 in seven poultry workers in Russia, and assessed that avian influenza remains an uncommon infection in humans and the risk of the H5N8 strain to the UK population is low. Further information on the evidence which supports this can be found in [PHE's risk assessments](#). Any persons exposed to confirmed H5N8 in avian species will receive health advice from a local health protection team. In addition, PHE advises that the risk to the public's health from the other three virus strains which have been found in GB during 2020/2021 (H5N2, H5N1, H5N5) is very low.

- We publish a report (updated regularly) on findings of highly pathogenic avian influenza (bird flu) in wild birds in Great Britain [available](#) and further information on avian influenza findings in wild birds in GB and Europe can be found in our [outbreak assessments](#).

The measures followed a number of confirmed cases of avian influenza in England. This includes:

- H5N2 (low pathogenic) avian influenza confirmed at a site near Deal in [Kent](#) on 2 November.
- H5N8 (highly pathogenic) avian influenza confirmed at a site near Frodsham in [Cheshire](#) on 2 November
- H5N8 (highly pathogenic) avian influenza confirmed at a broiler breeder farm near Leominster in Herefordshire on 10 November .
- H5N8 (highly pathogenic) avian influenza was confirmed at a site near Stroud in Gloucestershire on 19 November.
- H5N8 (highly pathogenic) confirmed at a premises near Melton Mowbray in Leicestershire on 21 November.
- H5N8 (highly pathogenic) influenza confirmed at two premises near Northallerton, North Yorkshire on [29 November](#) and 1 December.
- H5N8 (highly pathogenic) influenza confirmed at a premises near Attleborough, Breckland, Norfolk on 4 December.
- H5N8 (highly pathogenic) avian influenza confirmed at a premises near King's Lynn, King's Lynn and West Norfolk, Norfolk on 5 December.
- H5N8 (highly pathogenic) avian influenza confirmed at a wild bird rescue centre near Droitwich Spa, Wychavon, Worcestershire on 13 December.
- H5N8 (highly pathogenic) avian influenza confirmed at a premises near Near Willington, South Derbyshire, Derbyshire on 15 December.
- H5N1 (highly pathogenic) avian influenza confirmed in backyard chickens near Hawes, Richmondshire, North Yorkshire on 18 December.
- H5N8 (highly pathogenic) avian influenza confirmed in breeding ducks at a premises near Attleborough, Norfolk on 19 December.
- H5N8 (highly pathogenic) avian influenza confirmed in a backyard flock near Gillingham, Dorset on 19 December.
- H5N8 (highly pathogenic) avian influenza confirmed in captive birds near Attleborough, Norfolk on 26 December.
- H5N8 (highly pathogenic) avian influenza confirmed in rearing ducks at a premises near Watton, Norfolk on 28 December.
- H5N8 (highly pathogenic) avian influenza confirmed in backyard poultry at a premises near Exmouth, West Devon, Devon on 29 December.
- H5N8 (highly pathogenic) avian influenza confirmed in laying chickens at a premises near Redcar, Redcar & Cleveland on 6 February 2021.

- H5N3 avian influenza (low pathogenic) confirmed in turkeys at premises near Winsford, Cheshire West and Cheshire on 26 March.
- H5N8 (highly pathogenic) avian influenza confirmed at a commercial broiler farm near Uttoxeter, East Staffordshire, on 27 March 2021.
- H5N8 (highly pathogenic) avian influenza confirmed in captive birds near Skelmersdale, West Lancashire, on 31 March 2021

In each case Defra has acted quickly to cull affected birds and to introduce movement restrictions to limit the risk of the disease spreading.