

# **Bird flu – Latest media updates: All poultry and captive birds must now be housed until further notice**

## **Current situation**

All poultry and captive birds must be housed in England until further notice, following an increase in the number of detections of avian influenza in wild birds and on commercial premises.

Bird keepers are required to shut their birds indoors and implement strict biosecurity measures to help protect their flocks from the threat of avian influenza, regardless of whatever type or size. Introducing these steps on farm is the most effective way in reducing the risk of disease spreading. The disease could kill your birds if these actions aren't taken.

The housing measures build on the strengthened biosecurity measures that were brought in as part of the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ) in October 2022. The AIPZ means that all bird keepers need to take extra precautions, such as restricting access for non-essential people on site, ensuring workers change clothing and footwear before entering bird enclosures and cleaning and disinfecting vehicles regularly to limit the risk of the disease spreading.

The UK has faced its largest ever outbreak of bird flu with over 200 cases confirmed across the country since late October 2021. Check the list of [confirmed avian influenza cases](#).

These measures will remain in place until further notice, and will be kept under regular review as part of the government's work to monitor and manage the risks of avian influenza.

The wild bird risk across Great Britain has increased from high to very high and the risk to poultry with stringent biosecurity remains at medium. The risk to poultry with poor biosecurity is still considered high, in light of the increased number of infected premises observed during September and October and the distance of some of these, as well as wild bird cases, from the coast. All bird keepers must now follow enhanced measures at all times to prevent the risk of future outbreaks.

Dr Christine Middlemiss, the UK's Chief Veterinary Officer, said:

We are seeing a growing number of bird flu cases on commercial farms and in backyard birds across the country driven by high levels of disease within wild birds. Unfortunately we expect the number of cases to continue to rise over the coming months as migratory birds return to the UK, bringing with them further risk of disease that can spread into our kept flocks.

We're taking action already by implementing a national Avian Influenza Prevention Zones and housing order, but it is important that all bird keepers – wherever they are in the country – ensure that cleanliness and hygiene are at the forefront of their minds to keep their flocks safe and limit the impact of the outbreak.

Public health advice remains that the risk to human health from the virus is very low and food standards bodies advise that avian influenzas pose a very low food safety risk for UK consumers. Do not touch or pick up any dead or sick birds that you find and instead report them to the Defra helpline on 03459 33 55 77. There is no impact on the consumption of properly cooked poultry products, including eggs.

All poultry gatherings, including at fairs, shows and markets, remain banned, due to a large number of flocks mixing together and the risk posed by any infections spreading across the country.

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 or captive birds.

## **Advice to poultry keepers**

All bird keepers must keep a close watch on them for signs of disease and maintain good biosecurity at all times. If you have any concerns about the health of your birds, seek prompt advice from your vet.

All bird keepers (whether they are pet birds, a commercial farm or just a few birds in a backyard flock) must remain vigilant and help prevent avian influenza by:

- housing or netting all poultry and captive birds
- cleanse and disinfect clothing, footwear, equipment and vehicles before and after contact with poultry and captive birds – if practical, use disposable protective clothing
- reduce the movement of people, vehicles or equipment to and from areas where poultry and captive birds are kept, to minimise contamination from manure, slurry and other products, and use effective vermin control
- keep records of mortality, movement of poultry and poultry products and any changes in production
- thoroughly clean and disinfect housing on a continuous basis
- keep fresh disinfectant at the right concentration at all farm and poultry housing entry and exit points
- minimise direct and indirect contact between poultry and captive birds and wild birds, including making sure all feed and water is not accessible to wild birds
- prevent access by poultry to ponds and watercourses and ensure that birds are kept in fenced or enclosed areas

It is a legal requirement for bird keepers in the national AIPZ to take these biosecurity measures.

See our [biosecurity advice](#) for more information.

Avian influenza (bird flu) is a [notifiable animal disease](#). If you suspect any type of avian influenza in poultry or captive birds you must report it immediately by calling the Defra Rural Services Helpline on 03000 200 301. In Wales, contact 0300 303 8268. In Scotland, contact [your local Field Services Office](#). Failure to do so is an offence.

## Cases in England

For details of the current avian influenza H5N1 cases in England and the measures that apply in the disease control zones around these cases, see the [avian influenza: cases and disease control zones in England guidance](#).

Check if you are in a zone on our [interactive map](#).

## Wild birds

The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) carries out year-round avian influenza surveillance of dead wild birds submitted via public reports and warden patrols.

You should call the Defra helpline (03459 33 55 77) if you find:

- one or more dead bird of prey or owl
- 3 or more dead gulls or wild waterfowl (swans, geese and ducks)
- 5 or more dead birds of any species

APHA then collect some of these birds and test them to help us understand how the disease is distributed geographically and in different types of bird, not all birds will be collected.

Do not touch or pick up any dead or visibly sick birds that you find. For further information see our [advice to the public](#).

For further details see the report (updated weekly) of [findings of HPAI in wild birds in Great Britain](#) and our [outbreak assessments](#).

Sick or injured wild birds should not be reported to the Defra Helpline. Instead Sick birds should be reported in England and Wales to the RSPCA (0300 1234 999) and in Scotland to the SSPCA (0300 999 999) who dependent on the situation may be able to offer assistance.