

Poultry keepers reminded of the importance of biosecurity and to be vigilant for signs of Avian Flu

This is the same strain of the virus found in wild birds in England over recent weeks and the first finding in Wales this year.

The wild bird, a buzzard, was found dead and was submitted as part of a regular batch by a Non-Governmental Organisation for testing as part of wild bird surveillance

The finding of the disease in this wild bird follows the introduction of a Prevention Zone in Wales on 25 January, which requires all keepers of poultry and other captive birds to take appropriate and practicable steps to prevent the spread of the disease.

The veterinary risk is not considered to have increased for either wild birds or to poultry/captive birds in Wales as a result of this finding. The existing enhanced biosecurity requirements remain in force and are considered the appropriate and proportionate response.

This strain of influenza affects birds, not people, and the risk to public health as a result of this finding is negligible.

Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs Lesley Griffiths said:

“The finding of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza H5N6 in a wild bird in Barry follows recent findings of the disease in wild birds in England and across Europe. This finding is not unexpected at this time of year and there is a constant risk of the disease at this time.

“It follows our recent calls for bird keepers to be vigilant and practice high levels of biosecurity and the introduction of an All Wales Prevention Zone on 25 January to mitigate the risk to poultry and other captive birds. This remains in place and the existing enhanced biosecurity requirements are still considered to be proportionate following this finding.”

Senior Veterinary Officer for Wales Dr Gavin Watkins said:

“This is the first finding this year in Wales and reminds us all of the risk of avian influenza infection. Bird keepers must remain vigilant for signs of disease and I cannot stress enough the importance of practicing the very highest levels of biosecurity.

“The main source of infection to captive birds is wild waterfowl, and biosecurity measures must address both direct and indirect spread of infection to areas where domestic birds are kept. Birds of prey such as buzzards are probably infected by eating affected waterfowl and are unlikely to play a role in transmission. The movement of poultry should be minimised, and clothing and equipment should always be cleansed and disinfected before and after their use.”

If poultry keepers are concerned about the health of their birds they should seek advice from their veterinary surgeon. If they suspect their birds have AI, they should report it to their local [Animal and Plant Health Agency](#) (external link) immediately.

If members of the public find dead wild waterfowl (swans, geese or ducks) or gulls, or five or more dead wild birds of other species in the same location, they should report them to the Defra helpline on: 03459 33 55 77 or email: defra.helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk. This service covers the whole of GB.

All keepers are encouraged to register their poultry. It is a legal requirement to register if keepers have premises with 50 or more birds. Keepers of premises with fewer than 50 birds are encouraged to [register voluntarily](#) (external link).

Keepers are advised to sign up for [disease alerts](#) (external link).

More information on Avian Influenza, the current situation in Wales and across the UK and advice for backyard keepers, including on biosecurity is available on the [Welsh Government's website](#).