

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

The Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has today announced the detection of the European strain of the H5N6 highly pathogenic Avian Influenza virus in 17 wild birds in Dorset. A local "avian Influenza protection zone" will be introduced in the affected area of Dorset which will require captive bird keepers to put in place enhanced biosecurity measures.

The risk to public health is regarded as low to very low. The Food Standards Agency has also offered reassurance that bird flu does not pose a food safety risk for UK consumers.

Wales is currently free from Avian Flu, but there is a constant risk the disease may arrive during the bird migration season.

The Chief Veterinary Officer is advising all poultry keepers in Wales, from small backyard flocks to large commercial premises, to review their biosecurity, sign up for disease alerts and register their birds with the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) by contacting their GB Poultry Register Helpline on 0800 634 1112. Keepers are also reminded they must report any unexplained deaths or sickness in their birds to their vet.

The Chief Veterinary Officer said:

"Although Wales is currently free from Avian Flu, the wild bird migration season is well under way and there is a constant risk of the disease, particularly at this time.

"Finding Avian Influenza (AI) in wild birds in the UK is not unexpected at this time of year and surveillance in other Member States has identified AI throughout Europe in recent weeks.

"Detection of the disease in wild birds in Dorset emphasises the need for poultry keepers to remain vigilant and monitor their birds for any signs of disease.

"I cannot stress enough the importance of practicing the very highest levels of biosecurity and I urge all poultry keepers to review their biosecurity plans. They must be prepared and take actions for example feeding and watering birds under cover to help reduce the chance of their birds becoming infected.

"Keepers of poultry and other captive birds should ensure every effort is made to prevent contact with wild birds. 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](#).