

Poultry keepers urged to maintain highest possible standards of biosecurity as housing measures lift

- Compulsory housing order is lifted
- High standards of biosecurity remain essential as the risk of avian influenza continues
- New mandatory biosecurity measures introduced for all outside birds

The compulsory housing measures for poultry and captive birds, which were introduced across Great Britain in December as one of a range of measures to stop the spread of avian influenza, have been lifted today [from 23:59 31 March 2021].

Poultry and other captive birds will no longer need to be housed unless they are in a Protection Zone and are now allowed to be kept outside. However, the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone ([AIPZ](#)) remains in force and additional mandatory biosecurity measures have also been introduced as infection may still be present in the environment for several more weeks.

Those who intend to allow their birds outside from today must follow [guidance](#) and take action to [prepare the outside areas](#). When released, owners should continue to take extra precautions and birds should be kept in fenced or enclosed outdoor areas whilst feed and water must be provided under cover where wild birds cannot gain access.

Good biosecurity is the most effective method of disease control available and bird keepers should apply enhanced measures at all times to prevent and mitigate the risk of future outbreaks.

Great Britain's three Chief Veterinary Officers have reminded all bird owners, that regardless of flock size, they should not be complacent.

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

Whilst the lifting of the compulsory housing order is welcome news, rigorous biosecurity remains the most important thing bird keepers can do keep their birds safe.

It is thanks to the hard work of all bird keepers, who have played their part and kept their flocks safe this winter, which has allowed us to take this action today. However, the recent cases of avian influenza show that it's more important than ever for bird keepers to remain vigilant for signs of disease and maintain stringent standards of biosecurity.

All bird keepers (whether they have pet birds, a commercial sized or a backyard flock) must be diligent in continuing to take effective and precautionary biosecurity measures including cleansing and disinfecting equipment, clothing and vehicles, limiting access to non-essential people on their sites, and workers changing clothing and footwear before entering bird enclosures.

To help ensure bird keepers meet the requirements set out in the [AIPZ declaration](#) and protect their birds from this highly infectious virus, the Government has provided [biosecurity guidance](#) and published a [biosecurity self-assessment checklist](#), in addition to steps keepers should take before they [release their birds](#). This includes the new AIPZ legal requirement to keep free ranging birds within fenced areas, and ensure that ponds, watercourses and permanent standing water are fenced off to minimise any direct or indirect contact with wild birds.

Further Information: