

# Press release: New measures to protect against Avian Flu

The Government Chief Vet has confirmed new measures to protect against avian flu that take a more targeted approach to controlling the disease.

Following plans set out earlier this month, all poultry keepers across England [must continue to observe strict biosecurity measures, with housing or netting required in higher risk areas.](#)

This approach is based on the current situation and the latest veterinary advice, which concludes that it is the best option to control disease, protect birds' welfare and ensure consumers can buy free range products.

This new approach will apply from 28 February, when the current prevention zone expires. It gives most keepers the option to let birds outside whilst still taking reasonable precautions against avian flu. The ban on poultry gatherings remains in force.

All poultry keepers – whether they keep a commercial flock or a few chickens in their back garden – must continue to practise strict disease prevention measures, following Defra's guidance to take steps to reduce the risk of infection via the environment.

Chief Veterinary Officer Nigel Gibbens said:

Effective disease control will always be our priority. H5N8 continues to circulate in wild birds and we must all continue to do everything we can to reduce the risk of disease. All keepers across the country must follow strict mandatory disease prevention measures.

Based on clear scientific evidence, the risk from wild birds is too high in some areas of England to rely on biosecurity measures alone. That's why we are requiring birds in Higher Risk Areas to be housed or protected from wild bird contact by netting.

We believe this is the best approach to control disease, protect birds' welfare and ensure consumers can buy free range products. As with any disease control measures these will be kept under review based on the latest situation and up-to-date scientific advice.

The risk of disease across the country remains high and measures are likely to be in place until at least the end of April.

The advice from Public Health England is that the risk to public health is very low and the Food Standards Agency has said there is no food safety risk for consumers.

## What poultry keepers must do

H5N8 is spread from wild birds, as well as from infected kept birds, which is why people who keep poultry are currently required to take action to try to avoid contact between poultry and wild birds – either direct, bird-to-bird contact, or indirect contact via the environment, where disease can be spread through things like contaminated bird droppings.

The best way to avoid contact between poultry and wild birds is to keep them housed in a suitable building. However, the new targeted approach is designed to give keepers options and allow free range production to continue.

- Keepers in higher risk areas must continue to keep birds housed or netted. This is because, based on extensive scientific advice, we believe the risk from wild birds in these areas to be higher. These areas are close to large bodies of water where wild waterfowl congregate. We have published a paper outlining the rationale behind these areas and you can see if you are in one using our [interactive map](#).
- All other keepers can choose to continue to house birds or let birds outside into fenced areas, but must follow strict Defra guidance to reduce the risk of infection. This includes a risk assessment to check that outside areas are not contaminated and the risk of contact with wild birds is low. If you have any concerns you should continue to house your birds or keep them in covered runs or netted areas.

The H5N8 strain of the disease has been confirmed at a poultry farm in Suffolk, three linked premises on a commercial game farm in Lancashire, three separate poultry farms in Lincolnshire and in backyard flocks in North Yorkshire and Carmarthenshire. Where avian flu is confirmed, we take swift action to limit the spread of disease with restrictions around affected premises and full investigations to determine the source of infection. Further details of these cases are available in our [rolling news story](#).

## Background

1. This announcement follows [plans set out earlier this month](#).
2. Keepers can find out if they are in a Higher Risk Area using our [interactive map](#).
3. Keepers should read our [guidance on what they must do under the new Prevention Zone](#).
4. Read [Defra's rationale for Higher Risk Areas in England from 28 February](#).

5. For further information on what the new Prevention Zone means for poultry keepers, contact the Defra helpline on 03459 33 55 77.
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## [Blether Tay-Gither – Storytelling in Dundee](#)



[From Blether Tay-Gither :](#)

Our February Blether will be on Tuesday 28th February – at 7pm in Madigan’s Food Emporium and Bookshop, Castle Street.

The theme this month is “Tales Frae Ower the Water.”

Hope to see some of you there – all welcome!

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## [News story: Innovative natural ingredient could help prevent diabetes](#)

From:

First published:

24 February 2017

Part of:

Innovate UK-supported life science company Phynova finds further evidence that its plant-based food ingredient promotes healthy blood sugar.

In a clinical trial run in conjunction with the [University of Southampton](#) and [Oxford Brookes University](#), [Phynova](#) found clinical proof that its ingredient Reducose™ is effective at maintaining healthy blood glucose levels.

The study was funded through an Innovate UK grant. It demonstrated that Reducose™ could significantly suppress blood glucose and insulin rises after eating.

Reducose™ is a patented natural functional food ingredient. Derived from mulberry leaves, it can be incorporated directly into foods and drinks or used on its own in supplements to prevent sugar being absorbed by the body.

Dr. Mark Lown, lead author and clinical investigator, said:

It has been estimated that as much as a third of the UK population are prediabetic, where blood sugar levels are higher than normal but not high enough to be classed as diabetes. Excess calories from sugar and carbohydrate can increase the risk of developing diabetes.

The results of this study are positive and suggest that this herbal extract may have a role to play in regulating blood sugar levels. Further studies are required to evaluate the long-term effects.

The findings of the study are published on [open access journal PLOS ONE](#) and can be read for free.

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## **[Beijing to replace all taxis with new energy vehicles](#)**

Beijing is aiming to gradually replace its petrol-powered taxis with greener new energy vehicles to help reduce air pollution starting from this year.



A new energy car is on the road in Beijing. [File photo/ecns.cn]

The plan is contained in a discussion document on preventing and solving air pollution problems in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Region and neighboring provinces, which was issued on February 14, according to National Business Daily.

All petrol-and diesel-powered taxis being taken out of service would need to be replaced by electric or liquid petroleum gas (LPG) powered cars. Any vehicles that taxi companies plan to buy should be electric or other types of new energy cars.

Statistics show that Beijing currently has about 71,000 taxis in total, out of which 67,000 are conventionally powered, the National Business Daily reports.

It is estimated the market size would reach 9 billion yuan (about 1,309 million USD) if all the taxis in Beijing were replaced by electric or natural-gas-powered vehicles, according to National Business Daily.

Experts say once the plans in the discussion document implemented, it will not only contribute to the environment, but stimulate China's new-energy vehicle industry.

However, it is not easy for green powered taxis to compete with traditionally powered ones at present, due to concerns over longer time needed on charging and the limited mileage of electric vehicles, says Liu Tao from the Beijing Taxi Cum Automotive Leasing Association

Purchasing a traditionally powered vehicle would generally cost between 60,000 yuan (about 8,725 USD) to 70,000 yuan (about 10,179 USD), but an electric vehicle would cost about 140,000 yuan (about 20,359 USD), Liu said.

But if the number of new energy vehicles is increased, that cost will go down, say Li Liangjin, CEO of CAOCAO, a Chinese travel service platform.

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## [China to build 6M homes for shantytown-dwellers in 2017](#)



Aerial photo taken on Jan 9, 2017 shows view of Zhangqiao, one of the largest shantytowns, and surrounding estate in Hongkou district, East China's Shanghai. [Photo/Xinhua]

China will build 6 million new homes for residents of shantytowns before the end of 2017, said Chen Zhenggao, Minister of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, at a news briefing in Beijing on Feb 23.

The Chinese central government started a three-year project to rebuild urban shantytowns in 2015, aiming to construct a total of 18 million new homes in all. In 2015, construction began on 6.01 million new dwellings, and another 6.06 were started in 2016.

According to Chen, the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development (MHURD) kicked off this year's shantytown transformation work on Jan. 16. The central government has provided 224.3 billion RMB in subsidies for the work in 2017, an increase of 15 billion RMB compared with last year.

China is determined to reconstruct all of its existing shantytowns by 2020. MHURD is working with relevant departments to conduct a thorough investigation and make the planned transformation a reality.