

All Wales Prevention Zone declared to protect poultry from Avian Flu

The Prevention Zone will come into force from 00:01 on 25 January 2018.

In January, there have been three separate findings in England of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza H5N6 in Wild Birds and in response Defra issued a Prevention Zone across England.

A veterinary risk assessment for England and Wales shows that the risk level for disease in wild birds has increased from Medium to High. The risk associated with direct and indirect transmission to poultry has also increased from Low to Medium. The risk to poultry, however, is dependent on the level of biosecurity at individual sites.

Although there are currently no findings of Avian Influenza in Wales, as a precautionary measure in response to the increased risk level, an All Wales Avian Prevention Zone will be introduced.

The prevention zone will require all keepers of poultry and other captive birds, irrespective of how they are kept, to take appropriate and practicable steps, including:

- ensure the areas where birds are kept are unattractive to wild birds, for example by netting ponds, and by removing wild bird food sources
- feed and water your birds in enclosed areas to discourage wild birds
- minimise movement of people in and out of bird enclosures
- clean and disinfect footwear and keep areas where birds live clean and tidy
- reduce any existing contamination by cleansing and disinfecting concrete areas, and fencing off wet or boggy areas.

Keepers with more than 500 birds will also be required to take some extra biosecurity measures, including restricting access to non-essential people, changing clothing and footwear before entering bird enclosures and cleaning and disinfecting vehicles.

Cabinet Secretary said:

“As a precautionary measure, in response to the increased risk level, and to mitigate the risk of infection, I am declaring an All Wales Avian Influenza Prevention Zone.

“Although we have had, as yet, no findings of Avian Influenza in 2018, I consider this Prevention Zone and the requirement for enhanced biosecurity to be proportionate to the risk level faced in Wales. It is essential we take steps to protect our poultry industry, international trade and the wider economy in Wales.”

Chief Veterinary Officer Christianne Glossop said:

“All keepers of poultry and other captive birds will need to comply with the requirements of the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone.

Keepers must remain vigilant for signs of disease and practice the very highest levels of biosecurity.

“I strongly encourage all poultry keepers, even those with fewer than 50 birds, to provide their details to the Poultry Register. This will ensure they can be contacted immediately, via email or text update, in an avian disease outbreak, enabling them to protect their flock at the earliest opportunity and minimise the spread of infection.”

Avian influenza is a notifiable disease and any suspicion should be reported immediately to the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA)

Information on the requirements of the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone, guidance and latest developments are all available on the [Welsh Government](#) website.

Cabinet Secretary sets out aspiration for pan-Wales transport body

Whilst updating Assembly Members on positive discussions with the UK Government regarding the transfer of powers and the Core Valley Lines railway asset, the Cabinet Secretary set out how this further devolution would give us more of the tools we need to develop the schemes which will provide much needed improvements across Wales.

Taking Wales Forward, Prosperity for All and the Economic Action Plan will be strengthened as we drive a step change in the way we understand, plan, use and invest in transport in Wales. For the first time the Welsh Government has committed to a five-year programme of transport capital funding through Transport for Wales for both transport maintenance and new projects.

Speaking to Assembly Members, Ken Skates said:

“I am mindful of the need to make sure that Transport for Wales can deliver effectively for the whole of Wales, and following my announcement last month of the intention to set up a Transport for Wales business unit in north Wales, I have instructed Transport for Wales to bring forward proposals for a North Wales office. I expect this to be delivered at pace.

“On our new Wales and Borders rail service – we have made significant progress with the UK Government since last summer, and the Secretary of State for Transport and I have now reached agreement on the way forward on a number of key issues. On other issues officials are continuing to make good progress. Further devolution would give us the tools we need to develop the schemes which will provide much needed improvements across Wales, as identified within Network Rail’s Welsh route study.

“Transport for Wales is now entering a new stage of mobilisation, working closely with Business Wales to make opportunities available to local SMEs and third-sector enterprises, through the new rail service and the different metro schemes. Indeed as result of their progress, and subject to the UK Government doing their bit, I look forward to the award of the first made in Wales rail services contract – in May.

“Following the successful model of acquisition of Cardiff Airport, our aim is for the public transport network to be increasingly directly owned or operated by Transport for Wales. We need a transport body that prioritises people and businesses and finds innovative ways of building a truly resilient and modern transport system for the benefit of the people of Wales.”

Something to toast to: Welsh Food and Drinks sector edges nearer to meeting 2020 target early

Speaking during plenary, Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs Lesley Griffiths said the industry is thriving and stands on the edge of meeting the target of £7bn turnover by 2020.

The Cabinet Secretary also spoke of the challenges and opportunities Brexit presents and outlined how the Welsh Government is working with the sector to overcome these.

Cabinet Secretary said:

“Our Welsh food and drink industry continues to go from strength to strength. With the industry’s sales turnover increasing from £6.1bn to £6.9bn, we stand on the threshold of reaching our Food and Drink Action Plan target of £7bn by 2020 early.

“This is tremendous progress and we’ve seen great success since the Plan was published in 2014. It reflects the hard work and significant progress by businesses across Wales, large and small.

“The interest in our wonderful Welsh food and drink has never been greater. The quality, service and originality of the Welsh offer are recognised across the World.

“Wales’ food and drink industry is a huge asset. It contributes increasingly to our economy, creating jobs and careers where skills matter. It adds value to our agricultural produce and it brings prestige to our nation with a growing profile and reputation throughout the World. Wales has a winner.

“However, we cannot ignore the challenges and uncertainty Brexit presents. To maintain the momentum we have achieved to date, we must embrace change and seek any opportunities that arise.

“Through continued focus on building on what works, and through a readiness for Brexit, we will be fully ‘fit for market’ with industry well placed for optimal performance. I have every confidence we will continue to succeed and make the best of Brexit and deliver for Wales.”

New fund delivering life changing drugs faster than ever before

On the first anniversary of the flagship scheme, the First Minister revealed the average time for recommended new medicines to be made available was now only 10 days, way ahead of the 60 day deadline.

During a visit to Llandough Hospital, the First Minister met patients who have benefited from receiving Migalastat, a new medicine to treat Fabry disease, a serious and progressive condition that causes severe pain and can greatly affect people’s quality of life. Migalastat allows people with Fabry disease freedom from the frequent hospital visits required with the previous treatment options, enabling them to live a more normal life.

The First Minister said:

“The New Treatment Fund is one of our flagship projects and a key Welsh Government commitment. We are investing £80m over 5 years to ensure patients with life-threatening conditions can get much faster access to the latest medicines. Reaching and far exceeding

our 60 day target is a great achievement and is making a very real difference to people's lives.

"This significant investment has removed uncertainties over funding and will ensure NHS Wales is in the best position to provide the latest recommended medicines. Many of these provide a significant step forward in the treatment of diseases that, until now, have had few or no treatment options. It is clear from the patients I have spoken to today that this fund is helping to transform lives."

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething, said:

"I am delighted with the progress achieved in the first year of the New Treatment Fund. Patients can now access 82 new medicines, much more quickly than they would have, had the fund not been in place. These include medicines to treat Crohn's disease, uveitis, cystic fibrosis, psoriasis, asthma, osteoporosis and Gauchers disease. More than 20 new medicines have been made available to treat a wide range of cancers including cancers of the breast, head and neck, lung, colon, thyroid gland and pancreas.

"I look forward to seeing the fund continuing to promptly deliver the latest, innovative medicines to patients who need them, making a real difference to their lives."

Cabinet Secretary announces £6m initiative to help develop next generation of farmers

The Young People into Agriculture Scheme will offer financial support to high achieving individuals looking to establish a new business or to develop an existing business. Successful applicants will need to demonstrate they have the attributes to lead dynamic businesses and drive change in the wider industry.

The £6m scheme, made available as part of the Budget agreement with Plaid Cymru, will develop participants' leadership skills. They will be encouraged to deploy these skills and impart their experience and knowledge within the industry.

To complement this scheme, a Young People in Agriculture Forum is being proposed. Forum members will work with Welsh Government to develop policies

that benefit agricultural families, businesses and rural Wales.

The Forum will provide young people with an opportunity to express their views confidently and directly to Ministers, senior officials and industry bodies with a view to supporting the next generation into agriculture.

An important element of this initiative is around the development of future leaders. Members of the Forum will be expected to work with a mentor to develop a Personal Development Plan to support their training and development needs.

Launching the initiative during the FUW Farmhouse Breakfast and speaking subsequently to Farming Connect's Agri-Academy Rural Leadership students for 2017 the Cabinet Secretary said:

"I am consistently impressed by the enthusiasm and dedication of young people in Welsh agriculture. It has been one of my key priorities to support our next generation of farmers and I have spoken to many young people to gain a better understanding of what support they need to enter the industry and develop sustainable and resilient businesses.

"We need to be prepared for the challenges as we transition from the EU. The impact on our farmers is likely to be greater than for many other sectors. We must do all we can to build resilience and ensure we create an environment where business can prosper and individuals develop to become leaders of the industry. The two initiatives I am announcing today will give opportunities to young people to develop themselves and their businesses in preparation for a world outside the EU.

"Both initiatives will sit alongside wider Welsh Government support for both young and other new entrants such as Farming Connect and the Farm Business Grant. Whilst there are many challenges for agriculture in Wales, I remain confident there are opportunities to develop a profitable and resilient industry that will benefit Wales' future generations."