



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Avian Influenza

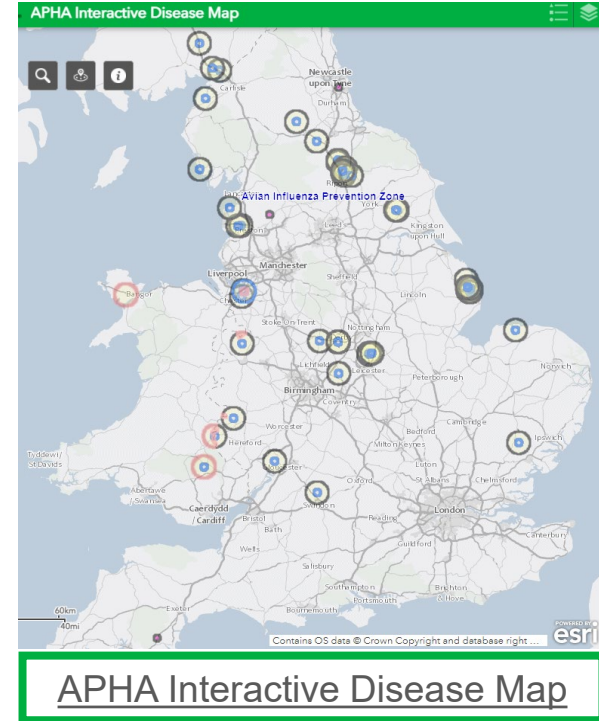
Smallholder Keeper Webinar

Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions
- Avian influenza Update – latest situation
- Essential Biosecurity Actions that you MUST take
- Contact details and further information

Latest Situation

- UK is experiencing its largest outbreak of avian influenza ('bird flu')
 - For the latest case numbers see [GOV.UK/Bird-Flu](https://www.gov.uk/bird-flu)
 - For locations of disease control zones currently in force in GB see the [APHA Interactive Disease Map](#)
- Compared to
 - 26 cases in 2020/2021
 - 13 cases in 2016/2017
- An **Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ)** came into force across:
 - Great Britain on the 3 November 2021
 - Northern Ireland on the 17 November 2021
 - Additional housing measures in force across the UK from 29 November 2021
- Legal requirement – keep all birds indoors and follow strict biosecurity measures in order to limit the spread of and eradicate the disease.



What is Bird flu?

- Avian Influenza ('Bird flu') is a highly contagious viral disease caused by the avian influenza virus, it primarily affects birds but it can also affect humans and other mammals.
- Viruses consist of proteins and avian influenza viruses are classified using the H and N proteins.
- There are 16 different H proteins and 9 N proteins in influenzas affecting birds and any combination of these is possible.
- The H5 and H7s are considered to be the most important from an animal health perspective.
- **All avian influenza cases in the UK this winter have been of the European H5N1 strain of avian influenza**
- This European H5N1 strain is highly contagious for birds but
 - UKHSA advise the **risk to the general public's health is very low.**
 - FSA advise there is a **very low food safety risk** for UK consumers. Properly cooked poultry and poultry products, including eggs, are safe to eat.

What are the signs of bird flu?

- Avian influenza viruses are classified according to their ability to cause severe disease (pathogenicity) in birds:

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI)

can cause severe disease and is often fatal in susceptible birds.

The main clinical signs of HPAI in birds are

- Swollen head
- Blue discoloration of neck and throat
- Loss of appetite
- Respiratory distress, such as gaping beak, coughing, sneezing, gurgling, rattling
- Diarrhoea and neurological signs
- Fever
- Cessation of laying or fewer eggs laid
- Increased mortality

- Clinical signs can vary between species of bird
- LPAI could turn into an HPAI when spreading in a flock

Low Pathogenic Avian Influenza (LPAI)

generally cause mild disease or no disease at all

- Mild to moderate respiratory signs
- Drop in egg production
- Secondary infections

If you have any concerns regarding the health of your birds contact your vet

If you suspect any type of avian influenza in poultry or captive birds you or your vet must report it immediately to the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA)

in England call 03000 200 301

In Wales call 0300 303 8268

In Scotland, contact your local [Field Services Office](#)

Failure to do so is an offence.

How does bird flu spread?

- A bird flu outbreak can occur at any point in the year
- However, there is a seasonal increase in the risk of a bird flu outbreak associated with the winter migration patterns of wild birds (often migratory waterfowl).
- But the risk is not just where migratory wild birds are!
- Infected migratory wild birds can infect local/sedentary wild bird species, poultry or other captive birds resulting in local transmission.
- The virus can be transmitted directly between birds or indirectly by birds coming into contact with environmental contamination, including faeces and feathers from infected birds.

- **How can I protect my birds?**

Essential Biosecurity Actions that you MUST take

- High standards of biosecurity should be maintained as good practice for the health of their birds
- Good biosecurity is an essential defence against diseases such as avian influenza and is key to limiting the spread of avian influenza in an outbreak.
- Keep a close watch on your birds for any signs of disease and seek prompt advice from a vet if you have any concerns.

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General Summary of the 2020/21 and current outbreak

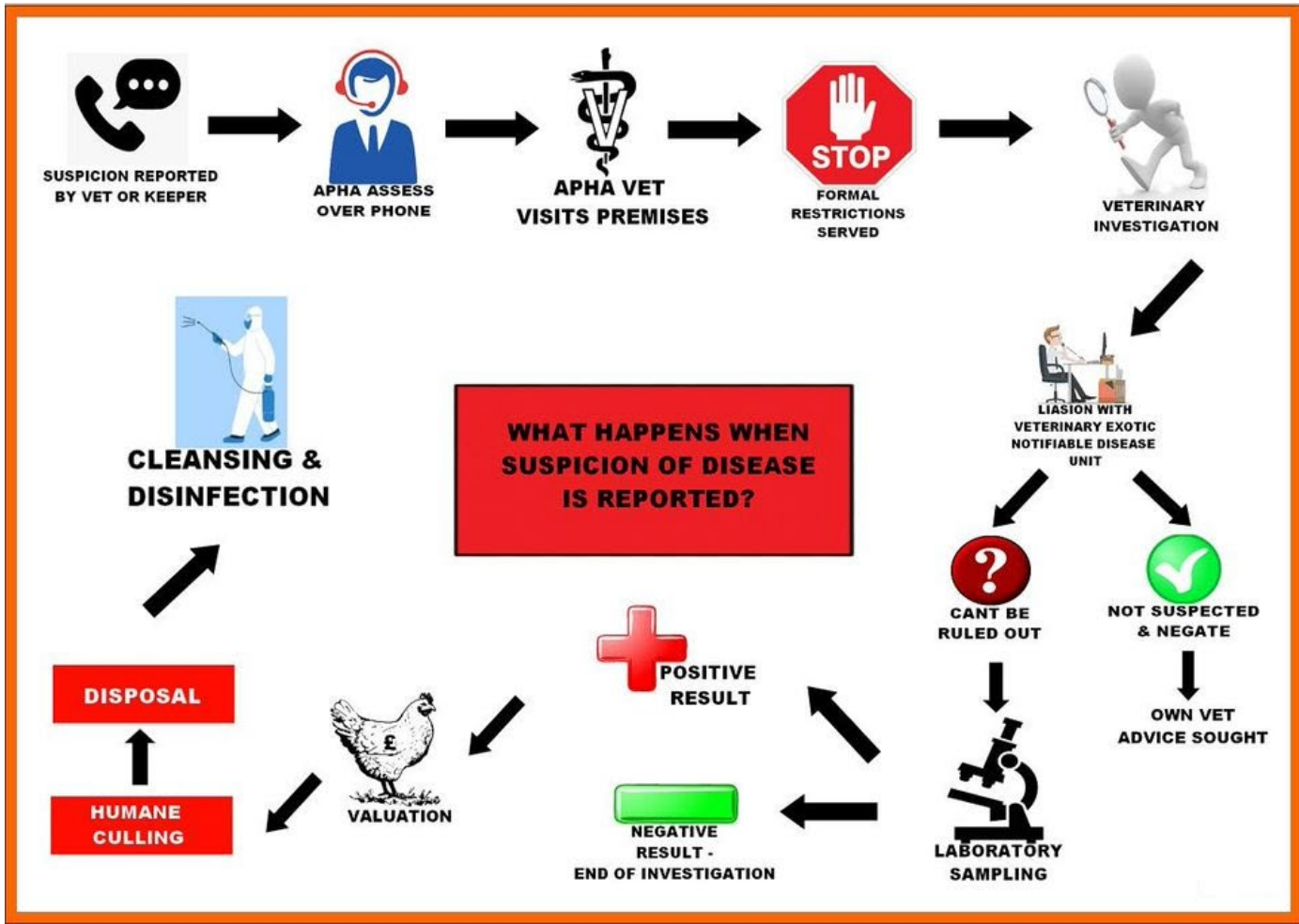
- **ALL of the IPs in the 2020/21 outbreak were attributed to direct contact or indirect contact with wild birds**
- **No evidence of longer distance spread between premises in 2020/21 or current outbreak so far, apart from when the premises were located close together and were part of the same business – THE BIOSECURITY WITHIN THE BUSINESS DID NOT WORK**
- **Usually the different components for biosecurity are ostensibly present, but they are not done well** - facilities are poorly maintained / incompletely / inconsistently e.g. vehicle washing, visitors book records

Avian Influenza Biosecurity Overview

- There is **no rocket science** – do the basics and **do them all well**.
- **Risk pathways** – all the ways that the virus can reach your birds - **keep the lessons of Covid in your mind**
 - Only **tiny doses** of virus are needed and these are then **amplified**
 - **Don't rely on a "hard outer shell"**
- **You need to do biosecurity best when you don't have disease**
- Biosecurity is not just for exotic outbreak prevention - **endemic disease benefits**
- **Licencing**!!
 - ... is **key to minimising impact** on the business – never a good thing to have disease.
 - ... **Licencing permits you to do something that is otherwise illegal**.
 - ... **Biosecurity key to licencing conditions**.
 - ... Depends on **evidence and trust**.
 - ... based on **risk assessment**.
- No easy answers – **good biosecurity requires real effort**

'Key Issues' for biosecurity

- **Bedding** / Enrichment material management
- **Building maintenance** / design
- **Flooding**
- **Location** – near coast /wetlands / migration routes / lakes
- **Biosecurity mindset**
- Pointless D (no C) – there is a C in **C&D:**
 - C**leansing **and** **D**isinfecting
- **Record keeping** (especially LPAI)
- Staff / **PPE discipline**
- **Ponds** on site / in the ranges
- **Vehicles** - restrict access
- **Visitors** - restrict access
- **Wild birds / rodents**
- Separate **premises** in close proximity e.g. allotments / neighbours
- **Contingency planning**
- **Licencing** – moves / restocking / rehoming



What happens when suspicion of disease is reported:

- Suspicion reported by Vet or Keeper
- Animal and plant health Agency (APHA) duty vet assess report during telephone conversation.
- If suspicion cannot be negated during the telephone conversation, formal restrictions are served on the premises
- APHA will initiate a veterinary investigation at the suspect premises
- APHA duty vet will liaise with their colleagues in the Veterinary Exotic Notifiable Disease Union (VENDU) and report of suspicion will either be:
 - Negated and the reporter informed of the decision and advised to contact their private veterinary surgeon for further advice; or
 - Suspicion cannot be ruled out and official samples will be taken for further investigation.
- If laboratory testing of official samples from birds at the suspect premises do not show any evidence of the presence of avian influenza the case will be negated, and the reporter informed of the decision and advised to contact their private veterinary surgeon for further advice
- If laboratory testing of official samples from birds at the suspect premises do show evidence of the presence of avian influenza and the Chief Veterinary Officer confirms a case of notifiable avian influenza actions which follow at infected premises include valuation of birds present, humane culling followed by biosecure disposal of carcasses and cleansing and disinfection of the premises.

Myth Busting

There is no automatic culling policy for avian influenza outbreaks in the UK. Birds will only be culled if:

- Avian influenza is confirmed in the flock following laboratory testing of samples.
- A veterinary risk assessment indicates that there is a strong likelihood that a premises keeping birds has significant links to an infected premises where disease has already been confirmed. These links could be via movements of birds, poultry products, people, equipment, or vehicles between the two premises.

Most premises in the 3 km Protection Zone will just receive a veterinary inspection to provide reassurance that the birds are fit and healthy. However, sampling of waterfowl may be needed, as these birds often do not show signs of infection but could still be carrying the virus.

Further details: [Notifiable Avian Disease Control Strategy for Great Britain](#) (section 35)

Further Information

Description	Useful Link
Customer Advice	customeradvice@apha.gov.uk
APHA animal disease alert subscription service	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apha-alert-subscription-service
Register your poultry	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/poultry-including-game-birds-registration-rules-and-forms
Latest Situation and Biosecurity Guidance	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/avian-influenza-bird-flu
Outbreak assessments for avian influenza	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/avian-influenza-bird-flu-in-europe
Bird Gatherings Guidance	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/bird-gatherings-licences
Avian Influenza Vaccination Guidance	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/avian-influenza-bird-flu-vaccination/avian-influenza-bird-flu-vaccination
Social Media	APHA Facebook https://www.facebook.com/APHAGov/ APHA Twitter @APHAgovuk https://twitter.com/APHAgovuk?s=20 Defra Press Office Rolling News story



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Thank you for your time