

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Avian influenza (bird) flu Prevention Zones

Planned controls in England from 28 February 2017

8 February 2017

This guidance is being kept under review and is subject to change and amendment between now and 28 February.

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Introduction

The [Prevention Zones currently in place across the whole of Great Britain](#) will remain in place until 28 February 2017.

We are taking these actions because of the continuing heightened risk of avian influenza (bird flu) throughout the UK. Since the autumn of 2016, outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza of subtype H5N8 have been [found in poultry and wild birds in the UK and in most countries across Europe](#). We are continuing to monitor the situation and work closely with the devolved administrations.

From 28 February 2017 we expect to put in place an amended Prevention Zone in England:

- we expect to be able to allow some free range poultry to go outside where clear biosecurity arrangements have been put in place to reduce the risk to poultry of doing so,
- but in 'Higher Risk Areas' birds will still need to be housed or kept in fully enclosed netted areas

This note sets out more details of what's proposed – we will review this information further, before we announce a final decision on the measures required within the Prevention Zone. These measures will provisionally remain in place until the end of April 2017. This approach remains under review and a final decision will be confirmed at the end of February.

The risk and the need for controls

There is still a high risk of avian influenza (bird flu) being present in wild birds in the UK and so across all of England¹, it is important that the keepers of poultry and captive birds take steps to keep them separate from contact with wild birds or their droppings.

The Prevention Zone measures are designed to help to do this. They also reduce the potential for any food or water that poultry use to become contaminated by wild birds.

¹ The Devolved Administrations have put similar Avian Influenza Prevention Zones in place until 28 February

Even when birds are housed or netted there is still a risk of infection, which is why there is an ongoing need for other best practice biosecurity measures to be in place.

Higher Risk Areas in England

Our analysis of the H5N8 outbreaks across the UK and Europe confirms that the risk remains highly significant across the entire country, but that areas of the country close to substantial inland or coastal bodies of water where significant numbers of wild birds (particularly wild waterfowl or gulls) collect are at an even higher risk. The closer that a premises with poultry or other captive birds is to such bodies of water, the greater the risk that disease will be carried into it by foraging wild birds, particularly ducks.

We have defined these areas in England as **Higher Risk Areas**.

A map of these areas can be viewed at Annex 1. This information will be available on our interactive map, where you will be able to check whether or not you are in one of these areas.

You will only be considered to be in a Higher Risk Area (HRA) if the whole of your poultry premises falls within this area. If any part of the premises is outside the HRA, then it will not be considered to be in a HRA.

Summary of options from 28 February 2017

From 28 February all keepers of poultry and other captive birds must continue to maintain good biosecurity and keep a close watch on the health of their birds. Where practical you should do all you can to keep chickens and turkeys in separate enclosures to ducks and geese.

All keepers of poultry and captive birds will also need to adopt one of the following three methods of separating their birds from wild birds, and in particular from wild waterfowl:

- a) [Housing](#) – option open to all areas of England.
- b) [Total netting/aviaries/covered runs](#) – option open to all areas of England
- c) [Supervised access to enclosed outdoor areas](#) – This option is *not* currently permitted and will only be available outside 'Higher Risk Areas' after 28 February.

Anyone who plans to allow their birds outdoors from 28 February must [take action now](#) to reduce the risk of infection from contaminated outdoor areas (ranges), equipment and other outdoor areas.

They should assess the risk, consulting their private vet as required, and if following that assessment they believe there is a risk that the outdoor areas may be contaminated or

that there is a high risk of contact with wild birds, particularly gulls and wild water fowl, they will be expected to continue to house their birds or keep them under netting.

Poultry keepers with more than 1,000 birds will need to take some additional biosecurity measures. These will include identifying clearly defined areas where access by non-essential people and vehicles will be restricted. Vehicles, equipment and footwear will need to be cleansed and disinfected.

Poultry keepers must continue to follow the existing [animal welfare rules](#).

A. Housing (in all areas of England)

Housing will be an option for all poultry and captive bird keepers in all areas. It will not be mandatory, but coupled with enhanced biosecurity it is likely to provide the best protection for your birds. (See Annex 4 for more detail)

Eggs or products from poultry housed after 28 February 2017 may not be able to be marketed as free range.²

If you decide to follow this option, all housing must be suitable for the purpose. All permanent openings must be covered with netting or mesh capable of keeping out wild birds the size of a dove or larger (25 mm mesh is recommended). It would be best practice to take steps to exclude smaller birds too. Bird welfare must be monitored and suitable steps taken to ensure that the environment is suitably enriched.

B. Netted areas, cages, pens and aviaries (in all areas of England)

You can also keep your poultry and captive birds separate from wild birds by

- keeping them in aviaries, cages, netted pens or runs, or by
- totally covering outside areas or ranges with netting

If you decide to follow this option, all birds must be housed or kept in fully enclosed and covered pens, runs or aviaries. The netting or mesh must be capable of keeping out wild

² Under EU poultry meat marketing regulations, keepers who are required by Government to house their birds to protect public and animal health can retain their free range status so long as their birds are not housed for more than the 12 week EU grace period. This expires in England on 28 February. If following that date housing remains in place it will only be possible for some standard 'free range' and 'traditional free range' birds to retain their status for a short while provided all the requirements for free range have been met.

birds the size of a dove or larger (due to the risk of damage from snow a larger mesh size be appropriate but no greater than 50mm mesh). You must take particular care, when erecting new structures or moving portable structures, to avoid areas to which wild birds have had access in the previous 50 days. You need to ensure that feed, water and bedding are not contaminated by wild birds (particularly wild waterfowl).

In Higher Risk Areas we would expect all poultry and birds to be either housed or kept in fenced and fully covered or netted areas. There are no general exemptions from this requirement³. Birds which cannot easily be housed, for example ducks, geese and game birds, will need to be kept in totally netted areas, even if it means netting a smaller area than they currently occupy.

C. Supervised access to enclosed outdoor areas (from 28 February, and not in 'Higher Risk Areas')

We expect that **from 28 February**, in some areas of the country, it may be safe to allow birds to have supervised access to enclosed (fenced) outside areas provided you have taken [proactive steps](#) to make these areas unattractive to wild birds and taken action to reduce any existing contamination:

- this option will not be available until 28 February at the earliest
- where it is allowed, this will be applicable to **all** bird keepers, whether they have a few chickens and ducks, or are a commercial poultry keeper

Even if the Prevention Zone allows you to let your birds out into an enclosed area, you must ensure that you have assessed the risks, and concluded that it is safe to let your birds out. **You must do a risk assessment, consulting your private vet if needed, to check that the area is not already contaminated or that there is a low risk that wild birds can come into contact with your birds while they are outside.**

If you have any concerns you should continue to house your birds or keep them in covered runs or netted areas.

You will need to make sure that outside areas (ranges) are fully fenced and that birds are not allowed to roam outside this fenced area. These areas must not include ponds or other areas of standing water. Any ponds or standing water that cannot be drained or fenced off should be covered or netted to discourage wild birds.

You must take all practical steps to deter gulls and wild waterfowl from accessing these outdoor areas (ranges). This will include measures such as not feeding outdoors, and not

³ Exemptions may exceptionally be available for some Zoological Collections

placing drinkers on the range. Where possible, you should also not allow domestic ducks or geese to range alongside other types of poultry.

You should also regularly check the range and actively scare away any wild birds that you see. It is particularly important to remove (in a bio-secure manner) the carcasses of wild birds found in or around the range, first reporting them to the Defra helpline on 03459 335577.

If there are any concrete areas, paths or hard-standings that may become contaminated by either poultry or wild waterfowl, they should be regularly cleansed and disinfected.

These measures are set out in full in Annex 4 to this document.

Planning and preparing

You should make sure that wild birds (particularly gulls, ducks and geese) are not attracted to or have access to the range or any other area that you intend to allow birds to access.

Make the range and outside areas unattractive to wild birds

- Drain ponds and areas of standing water – subject to obtaining the necessary consents and agreements, consider draining any ponds, standing water or wet areas
- Net/cover ponds – if you cannot drain ponds or larger bodies of water within 100m of the outdoor area (range) they should be covered/netted to prevent their use by wild birds
- Fence off ponds, standing water or wet or boggy areas – poultry should not have access to the areas around ponds or other wet areas as there is a much greater risk that these areas have been contaminated by the droppings of wild birds
- Remove any wild bird feed sources – check the range for any wild bird feed sources that might attract wildbirds: these are most likely to be associated with wet areas but also include spilt grain, seeds and uncovered feed bins.

Keep wild birds off the range

There are several ways that you can deter wild birds (in particular gulls and wild waterfowl) from landing on and feeding on the range. These include regularly walking the area particularly if accompanied by dogs and using wild bird visual bird scarers⁴. Remember to change outer clothing before going into the poultry shed.

⁴ Bird scarers can annoy and disturb the public so please use them in a considerate way. Good Practice Guidance can be found in the [NFU Code of Practice](#)

Decontamination/sanitisation of the range

Before allowing poultry to use a range after a period of housing where the range has not been used but may have been contaminated by wild birds, it may be possible to reduce the level of contamination to safe levels.

The virus that causes bird flu can still be ineffective in faeces/droppings and other contaminated material for up to 50 days at this time of the year (longer in wet conditions or in standing water). If wild birds have had access to your ranges and other outdoor areas, you must take steps to reduce the levels of contamination.

Options include:

- *Cleansing and disinfection of concrete and other impermeable areas* – use a [Defra approved disinfectant](#) at the recommended dilution rate. Appropriate pollution prevention measures must be [followed](#).
- *Decontamination of the range* – it may be possible to reduce the level of bird flu virus present in heavily contaminated areas by the use of some [Defra approved disinfectants](#) at the recommended dilution rate. Most approved disinfectants will quickly become inactivated when sprayed on organic material so are unlikely to be effective so please consult the manufacturer for advice on whether the product is likely to be effective and follow appropriate pollution prevention [measures](#).
- *Application of shavings/woodchip* – the resin in shavings and woodchips has some virucidal properties and may help reduce the virus load in wet areas. Please consult your private vet before considering this option as warm wet conditions can result in an increased risk of *aspergillosis* – a fungal disease that infects the respiratory tract of birds.

Reduce spread by people or objects

Limit the number of people who have access to the range and ensure that they have no contact with any other poultry or birds.

For the people that have to enter the area, ensure they have dedicated footwear and outer clothing. For sites with over 50 birds foot dips should be used on entry and exit to both houses and outdoor areas/range where the birds are kept.

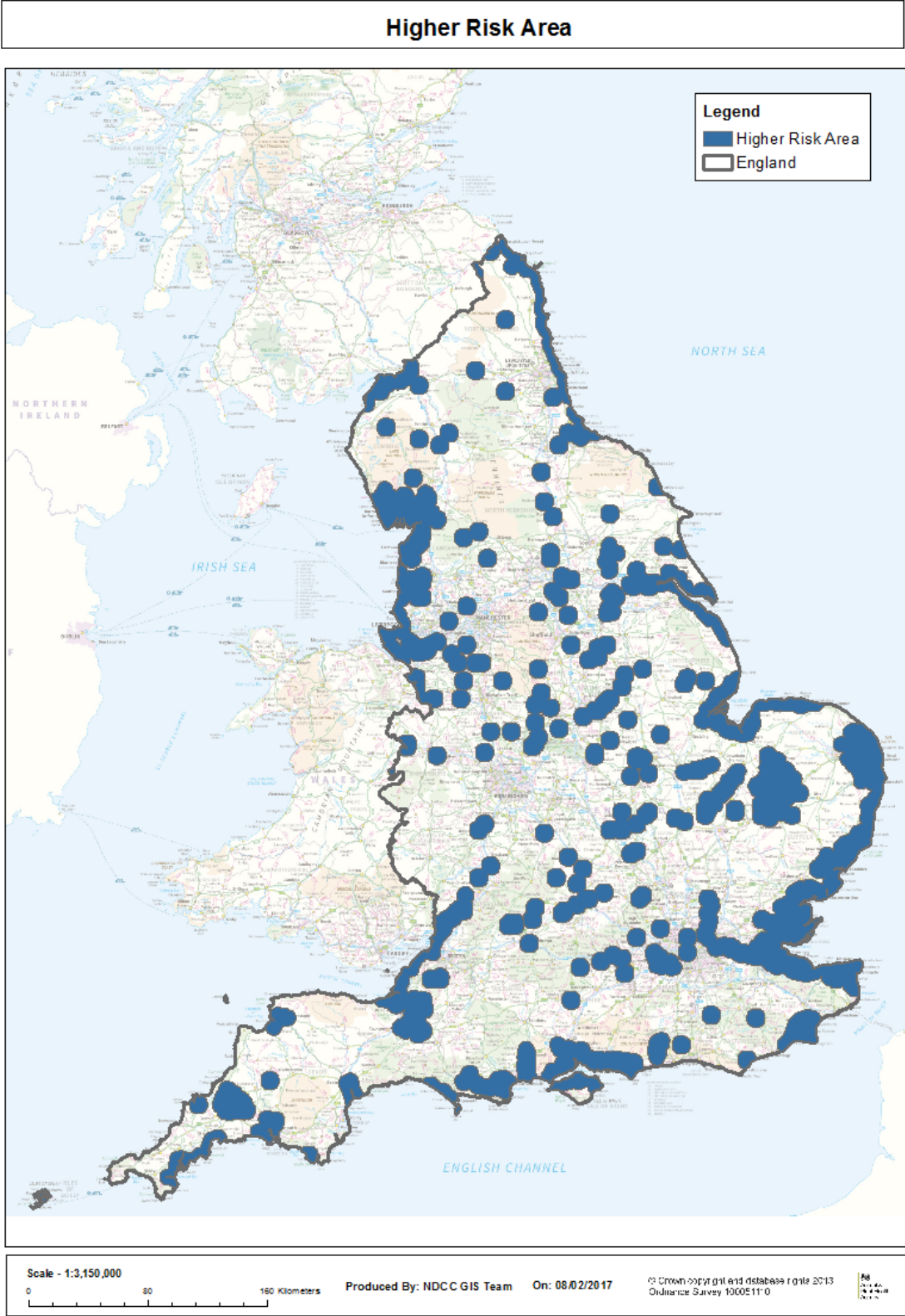
Ensure equipment, feed and bedding are stored undercover so they cannot be contaminated by wild birds (particularly wild waterfowl), do not share equipment between different groups of birds.

Disinfectants: pollution prevention and control

You do not need to get prior approval from the Environment Agency before applying any disinfectants to the range area provided the volume and concentration of disinfectant applied is similar to that applied in routine cleansing and disinfection operations.

Appropriate pollution prevention measures must however be followed in all cases to stop excessive uncontrolled disinfectant run off. Disinfectants must not be applied close to drinking water supplies or surface water bodies.

Annex 1 – Indicative map of Higher Risk Areas in England



Annex 2 – Minimum biosecurity standards - all keepers of poultry and captive birds must comply with these.

Keepers of poultry and other captive birds (irrespective of the number of birds or how they are kept) must adopt these biosecurity measures at all times.

General biosecurity measures include:

- Taking all reasonable precautions to avoid the transfer of contamination between premises, including cleansing and disinfection of equipment, vehicles and footwear;
- Where possible, domestic ducks and geese should be separated from other species;
- Reducing the movement of people, vehicles or equipment to and from areas where poultry or captive birds are kept;
- Ensuring feed, water and bedding has not been contaminated by or been in contact with wild birds and in particular gulls and waterfowl;
- Implementing effective vermin control⁵ where poultry or captive birds are kept;
- Records⁶ must be kept of all vehicles and people that enter the part of a premises where poultry are kept.

For sites with over 50 birds, foot dips containing a [Defra-approved disinfectant](#) should be used on entry and exit to both houses and outdoor areas/range where the birds are kept.

Requirement to report disease:

- Any significant change in bird health (for example, using production data and mortality data) should be discussed with a private veterinarian and if suspicion of AI cannot be ruled out then it must be reported to Defra/APHA

Note:

- Keepers should be able to demonstrate on-request how they have implemented these minimum biosecurity standard to assurance scheme auditors or inspectors.

⁵ Keepers must ensure that all HSE guidance is followed. Best practice guidance is available from the Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use (CRRU).

⁶ This is not a requirement for zoos or other facilities open to the public. This only applies to people that have had direct contact with birds and will enable us to trace any contact with other birds in the event of a disease outbreak. This is particularly important for anyone who is not an employee or a family member.

Annex 3 - Standard biosecurity measures – mandatory for all keepers with 1,000 birds or more

The following measures must be implemented by all poultry keepers with more than 1,000 birds although it is recommended for all poultry keepers with 50 birds or more.

The poultry site should be organised to minimise access to live birds by adopting 3 zones on the holding as outlined below:

Poultry (live bird) zone

- Access is limited to essential authorised personnel only;
- Full biosecurity practices must be adopted on entry and exit to housing and when moving between poultry houses;
- Bedding and feed should be stored in this zone;
- Only essential equipment and vehicles should be permitted to enter the zone;
- The exterior of any vehicles (focussing on wheels and wheel arches) which enter or leave the zone must be cleansed and disinfected on both entry and exit;
- Dedicated equipment and vehicles should remain within the zone.
- Thorough cleansing and disinfecting (based on industry best practice) of housing and equipment must be undertaken at the end of a production cycle and before new birds are introduced;
- Records must be kept of vehicles and personnel entering and leaving the zone.

Private (waste) zone

- Access is limited to essential personnel only and full biosecurity practices should be adopted on entry and exit to the area;
- This should be fully separated from the live bird housing with a clear demarcation;
- Waste and fallen stock must be held in appropriately biosecure facilities in this area with clear separation between both live and public zones;
- The exterior of any vehicles (focussing on wheels and wheel arches) which enters or leaves the zone must be cleansed and disinfected on both entry and exit;
- Records must be kept of vehicles and personnel entering and leaving the zone.

Public (bio-secure barrier) zone

- The Public and Essential workers/contractors may enter this area subject to standard biosecurity ;
- Non-essential vehicles should not enter this zone.

Note:

- Keepers must operate effective barrier hygiene before entering a poultry house or bio-secure area of the farm (for example, coveralls and dedicated house boots)
- Waste and fallen stock should be disposed of in a bio-secure manner to avoid contact with kept birds and full records kept.
- Keepers should be able to demonstrate how this 'zone system' works at a site level to auditors/inspectors. This should include a plan of the site and copies of written instructions to workers and contractors.

Annex 4 – Measures to be put in place to enable supervised access to enclosed outdoor areas (from 28 February, and not in ‘Higher Risk Areas’)

To enable some free range operations it may be acceptable outside of Higher Risk Areas, to allow birds to have access to a range. To take advantage of this option, keepers will need to implement the following measures in addition to the Minimum Biosecurity Requirements (and the Best Practice Biosecurity requirements if applicable).

Keepers and Operators must implement the following measures for any range/outdoor area which is not fully fenced and covered by netting:

- Anyone planning to allow their birds outdoors from 28 February must take action now to reduce the risk of infection from contaminated ranges, equipment and other outdoor areas.
- The virus causing bird flu can remain infectious for up to 50 days in outdoor areas/ranges. Consider a fallow/quarantine period between introduction of the birds and the last exposure to wild birds;
- Consider verandas (Winter Gardens) or partial netting [but this is not mandatory];
- Regularly clean and disinfect any concrete walkways, paths and so on, where poultry or wild birds have access to or where they may have been contaminated;
- Not allow feeding on the range;
- Not place drinkers on the range;
- Regularly police the range for wild birds – especially identifying and removing (in a bio-secure manner⁷) carcasses of wild birds;
- Fence off and netting of ponds, or heavily poached areas leading to standing water;
- Where netting of a pond is not be possible, poultry should be restricted from accessing that part of the range area within 100m of ‘open’ water;
- Take measures to discourage wild birds from using range areas, for example use of (wild) bird-scarers⁸ scarecrows and so on.
- Consider options for discouraging wildbirds and in particular gulls and wildfowl from entering the premises.

⁷ Wear gloves, double bag carcasses and dispose in accordance with animal by-product regulations, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/animal-by-product-categories-site-approval-hygiene-and-disposal> first reporting them to the Defra helpline on 03459 335577

⁸ Bird scarers can annoy and disturb the public so please use them in a considerate way. Good Practice Guidance can be found in the NFU Code of Practice