

Avian Influenza (bird flu) Prevention Zones Controls in England from 13 April 2017

13 April 2017

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Introduction

Since September 2016, highly pathogenic H5N8 avian influenza has been circulating in Europe. H5N8 is a particularly aggressive strain of bird flu, with high mortality in poultry which means that if birds become infected, there is a strong chance they will die.

To reduce the risk of H5N8, in late 2016, Defra put in place a series of measures to protect poultry and captive birds. This included increased wild bird surveillance, an indefinite ban on poultry gatherings, and from 6 December 2016, an Avian Influenza Prevention Zone.

This zone covered all of England (Wales and Scotland governments declared similar zones in their territories) and amongst other measures, required all keepers to house or otherwise separate poultry and captive birds from wild birds. The housing requirement was intended as a transitional measure to give keepers time to put in place other heightened biosecurity arrangements, and was subsequently targeted at only 'Higher Risk Areas'.

From 13 April 2017 the housing and range netting in identified Higher Risk Areas is no longer a legal requirement for free-range poultry and other captive birds. All other extra biosecurity requirements set out in the previous Avian Influenza Prevention Zone declaration of 28 February continue to apply.

The need for continued controls

Since mid-December 2016, there have been confirmed cases of H5N8 in poultry and wild birds in the country. When a case of this disease is confirmed in poultry, it is devastating for the poultry keepers and their businesses, as well as being costly to the taxpayer and the wider poultry industry.

These outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza show that risk of H5N8 within wild birds remains high across the whole of England. As a result, it remains vital that all keepers continue to observe strict biosecurity standards aimed at maintaining separation of their poultry and other captive birds from wild birds.

This document represents biosecurity guidance that is published in accordance with section 6A of the Animal Health Act 1981. The guidance provides more detail on the requirements contained in the current Avian Influenza Prevention Zone declaration. This applies to all keepers of poultry and captive birds in England from 13 April 2017. The zone will be kept under review.

H5N8 is a notifiable avian disease. It remains the case that anyone who suspects their birds of having avian influenza should discuss this as a matter of urgency with a private veterinarian. If suspicion of disease cannot be ruled out then it must be reported to Defra/APHA.

Biosecurity measures required from 13 April 2017

No-one wants to see birds compulsorily kept inside in the long term. We have looked carefully at the risks posed by H5N8. From 13 April 2017 the key change is that the additional restrictions previously required in Higher Risk Areas (HRA) will no longer apply and poultry keepers within those are now able to let their birds out. Other enhanced biosecurity measures continue to be required throughout England.

From 13 April 2017, a new Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ) covering the whole of England will continue to require the following by law:

- **All poultry and captive bird keepers in England must** comply with a set of minimum biosecurity standards whether you are in the new HRAs or outside them, regardless of flock size. These are summarised at Annex 1.
- **All poultry keepers in England with more than 500 birds must** comply with additional biosecurity measures regardless of whether you are inside or outside the HRA. These are set out in Annex 2.
- All keepers have the option to allow poultry and other captive birds to have **managed access to fenced outdoor areas**. If you plan to let your birds outdoors, there are additional biosecurity measures you must put in place. These apply regardless of the size of your flock, whether you have a commercial holding, a backyard flock or keep your birds as pets. Before birds are let outside, you must take all reasonable steps to remove and minimise the risk of existing faecal contamination from wild birds.
- **Minimising contact with wild birds**. You must consider whether the measures you are taking sufficiently reduce the risk of contact between your birds and wild birds, particularly wild waterfowl.
- **Preparing outside areas/ranges**: Where birds are to be let outside for the first time for several months, you must take all reasonable steps to remove faecal contamination from wild birds. This is set out at Annex 4.

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

These AIPZ measures will apply **until further notice**, but will be kept under constant review with the aim of lifting the declaration as soon as risk levels reduce to an acceptable level but most of these extra biosecurity measures should be regarded as standard good practice in the future to avoid future outbreaks.

Annex 1: Minimum biosecurity requirements

All 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.

Minimum biosecurity measures include:

- Reducing the movement of people, vehicles or equipment to and from areas where poultry are kept;
- Taking all reasonable precautions to avoid the transfer of contamination between premises, including cleansing and disinfection of equipment, vehicles and footwear;
- Keeping domestic ducks and geese separated from other species (for example by keeping them in separate runs or sheds);
- 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 control where poultry or captive birds are kept; ¹
- Records must be kept of all vehicles and people that enter the part of a premises where poultry are kept; ²
- Placing foot dips & boot brush containing a Defra-approved general poultry order disinfectant at the entry and exit of all houses and outdoor areas/range where birds are kept. ³

Requirement to report disease:

Any significant change in bird health (including increased mortality, decreased egg yield or growth rates; or changes in feed or water intake) should be discussed with a private veterinarian and if suspicion of disease 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 officials.

¹ Keepers must ensure that all HSE guidance is followed. Best practice guidance is available from the Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use (CRRU).

² 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

³ This is mandatory for all poultry keepers with more than 50 birds.

Annex 2: Additional biosecurity requirements - all poultry keepers with 500 birds or more

The following measures must be implemented by all poultry keepers with more than 500 birds although it is highly recommended that all poultry and captive bird keepers implement these measures where practicable.

The premises should be organised to minimise access to live birds by identifying and managing 3 discrete areas on the holding as outlined below:

Poultry (live bird) area

- Access is limited to essential authorised personnel only;
- Full biosecurity practices must be adopted on entry and exit to the zone;
- Keepers must operate effective barrier hygiene before entering a poultry house or the range (for example, coveralls and dedicated house boots);
- Only essential equipment and vehicles are permitted to be taken into the zone;
- The exterior of any vehicles (focussing on wheels and wheel arches) and equipment which enter or leave the area must be cleansed and disinfected on both entry and exit;
- Where possible use dedicated equipment/vehicles that only operate in this area;
- 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 this discrete area.

Private (ancillary use) area

- Access is limited to essential personnel only and full biosecurity practices must be adopted on entry and exit to the area;
- This must be fully separated from the live bird area with a clear demarcation;
- Bedding and feed (if not stored in the live bird areas), must be stored in this area;
- 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;

- Waste and fallen stock ⁴ must be held in appropriately biosecure facilities in this area with clear separation between both live bird and the public zones;
- Records must be kept of vehicles and personnel entering and leaving this area.

Restricted access (biosecure barrier) area

- Access to the public should be limited and only essential workers/contractors may enter this area subject to effective personal biosecurity;
- This area may include the farm office and areas of the premises used for general storage;
- Non-essential vehicles should not enter this zone.

General

Keepers must be able to demonstrate how this 'discrete biosecurity 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.

⁴ Waste and fallen stock must be disposed of in a bio-secure manner to avoid contact with kept birds and full records kept. You should keep copies of commercial documents and ask your fallen stock collector to keep good records of where they have been.

Annex 3: Separation of poultry and captive birds from wild birds

From 13 April 2017, there is no longer a mandatory requirement to house or keep birds in fully netted areas within the Higher Risk Areas. However, all poultry keepers must continue to take active steps to separate your birds from wild birds, in particular from wild ducks, geese and gulls.

Managed access to fenced outdoor areas/range

From 13 April 2017 you are required to put the following measures in place when your birds have access to the fenced outside range. This applies if you keep a commercial flock, a backyard flock or just keep birds as pets.

The biosecurity measures set out below must be sufficient to reduce the risk of contact between your birds and wild birds. See Annex 5 for a checklist of things to check.

The mandatory biosecurity and management measures, that must be taken by everybody regardless of flock size:

- Outdoor areas/ranges must be fully fenced and birds must not be allowed to roam outside this area;
- Regularly check the range for the presence of wild birds and take active steps to remove or deter any you find. If you find dead wild birds remove (in a bio-secure manner ⁵) the carcasses and report any ducks, geese or gulls to the Defra Helpline;
- Net/cover ponds and permanent standing water within the fenced area and fence off any wet or boggy areas and standing water, where this is not possible use an alternative paddock/range that doesn't have access to water;
- Take measures to discourage wild birds (in particular ducks, geese and gulls) from using range areas, for example use of visual bird-scarers ⁶, scarecrows, decoy predators or other methods;
- Remove any feeders and water stations from the range, or ensure that they are covered to sufficiently restrict access by wild birds;
- Regularly clean and disinfect any concrete walkways and hard standing areas, where poultry or wild birds have access, or where these may have been contaminated.

⁵ 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> after first reporting them to the Defra helpline on 03459 335577

⁶ 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

Good Practice:

- Consider increasing the number of shelters on the range area; it is advisable but not mandatory for foot dips containing a [Defra-approved disinfectant](#) together with a boot brush, to be used on entry and exit to houses and outdoor areas/range where the birds are kept.

Footpaths and rights of way:

- If a footpath or other right of way crosses the range or other area that birds have direct access to, you should consider placing signs and foot dips where the path joins the range; and in the longer term, consider applying to your local authority for a permanent or temporary diversion. You must not block a right of way.

Voluntary Housing

Should you chose to voluntarily house your birds, the following is good practice:

- All housing must be suitable for the purpose.
- All permanent openings should be covered with netting or mesh capable of keeping out wild birds the size of a dove or larger (a maximum 25 mm mesh is recommended).
- It is best practice to take steps to exclude smaller birds too.
- Bird welfare must be monitored and consider the steps needed to ensure that the environment is suitably enriched.
- Even if your production method entails keeping birds inside, housing alone is not sufficient to ensure the safety of your birds from H5N8 because it must be coupled with all of the mandatory measures detailed in Annex 1 and 2.

Voluntary netting of outdoor areas, cages, pens and aviaries

Should you chose to separate your poultry and other captive birds by netting areas, cages, pens and aviaries, the following is good practice:

- i) keeping them in aviaries, cages, netted pens or runs; or by
 - ii) fully covering outside areas or ranges with netting to prevent entry by wild birds
- The netting or mesh should be capable of keeping out wild birds the size of a pigeon or larger (due to the risk of damage from snow a larger mesh size may be appropriate but no greater than 50mm mesh).
 - You should take particular care, when erecting new structures or moving portable structures, to avoid areas to which wild birds may previously have had access (see annex 4 for steps to reduce the risk of contamination).

You must comply with all of the mandatory measures detailed in Annex 1 and 2.

Annex 4: Preparing and managing any outside fenced areas/ranges

Regardless of flock size, before birds are let outside for the first time for many months you must 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. And that you have taken all reasonable steps to remove any contamination that may be present.

Make the range and outside areas unattractive to wild birds

- Drain wet patches and areas of standing water – drain wet or boggy patches and areas of temporary standing water. In the longer term and subject to obtaining the necessary consents and agreements, consider whether it is possible to fill in or draining any permanent ponds or areas of standing water.⁷
- Net/cover ponds – you must net/cover any ponds that are within the fenced outside/range area. You should also consider netting ponds or larger bodies of water within 100m of the perimeter of the outdoor area/range. If this is not possible you should take active steps to deter birds from accessing them.
- Fence off ponds, streams, standing water or wet or boggy areas – poultry should not have access to the areas around ponds, streams, canals 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 wild birds: 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, using predator decoys and using wild bird visual bird scarers⁸.

Decontamination/sanitisation of the range

Where the range has not been used for several months and may therefore have been contaminated by wild bird faecal matter.

⁷ Consult the relevant authorities before undertaking any permanent works that might impact on biodiversity

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.

The virus that causes H5N8 can still be infective in faeces/droppings and other contaminated material for around 50 days (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 H5N8 virus present in heavily contaminated areas by the use of some [Defra-approved disinfectants](#) at the recommended dilution rate. Many approved disinfectants will quickly become inactivated when sprayed on organic material (such as soil) so are unlikely to be effective, so please consult the manufacturer for advice on whether the product you want to use 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 range, ensure they have dedicated footwear and outer clothing. For sites with over 50 birds foot dips should be used on entry and exit to houses and outdoor areas/range where the birds are kept. Remember to change or disinfect your footwear when accessing houses from the range.

Disinfectants: pollution prevention and control

- You do not need to get prior approval from the Environment Agency before applying any disinfectants to concrete areas or 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 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 5: Checklist for keepers

This is a check list designed to help bird keepers (commercial or hobby) ensure they are compliant with the required measures of the Prevention Zone declared on 13 April 2017 when your birds have access to outside fenced range areas.

Name of Farm or Business:			
Address:			
Contact Telephone / Mobile No.:		CPH ref. (if applicable)	
Completed by:		Date:	

Tick if apply	
	<p>Decontaminate outside areas</p> <p>Take all reasonable steps to remove contamination. You can do this by removing contaminated material, applying certain approved disinfectant products or fencing off contaminated areas.</p>
	<p>Actively discourage wild birds from landing on the range area</p> <p>This can be done with nets, cages, decoy predators; foot patrols etc. and should be started well in advance of letting your birds out onto the range.</p>
	<p>Net or cover ponds and drain waterlogged areas of the range</p> <p>If this is not possible, then you can fence the area off from your birds or use an alternative field. Long term, it may be beneficial to fill in ponds on your range, as they are very attractive to wild birds but you must consult with the Environment Agency and Natural England first.</p>
	<p>Remove any feeders and water stations from the range</p> <p>Feeding and watering must take place in covered areas which will not attract wild birds under cover and steps taken to prevent wild birds from gaining access.</p>
	<p>Regularly inspect your housing/netted run/cages for signs of wild bird or rodent access and prevent access by them</p> <p>Ensure rodent controls are effective and ensure that the housing, feed storage and provision areas are not accessible by wild birds or rodents.</p>
	<p>If you keep a variety of bird types, keep domestic waterfowl (ducks, geese etc.) and poultry separate</p> <p>This can be done with cages, or fencing and must feature good biosecurity between the areas – no shared feed or water, boot dips used at entry points</p>

	<p>Use dedicated footwear when accessing bird areas and install boot dips with a suitable disinfectant at entrances to bird areas</p> <p>Place disinfection footbaths at farm entrances and bird area entrances.</p>
	<p>Reduce movements of people, vehicles or equipment into or out of bird areas and prevent unnecessary access</p> <p>This helps to minimise contamination from manure, slurry and other products. Identify which areas should be restricted to essential visitors only.</p>
	<p>Cleanse and disinfect equipment and vehicles prior to entry onto or exit from premises</p> <p>Reasonable precautions must be taken to avoid transfer of contamination on and off site.</p>
	<p>Routinely cleanse and disinfect equipment used in bird areas</p> <p>Housing and equipment should be thoroughly cleaned at the end of any production cycle.</p>
	<p>Disinfectant</p> <p>Refer to the list of approved disinfectants and select a product approved under Poultry Orders. Check and replace regularly.</p>