



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

# Avian Influenza ‘Stop the Spread’ Webinar Series - 2021 to 2022

Answers to questions asked at the event

23 March 2022

Version: v1.0

We are the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. We're responsible for improving and protecting the environment, growing the green economy, sustaining thriving rural communities and supporting our world-class food, farming and fishing industries.

We work closely with our 33 agencies and arm's length bodies on our ambition to make our air purer, our water cleaner, our land greener and our food more sustainable. Our mission is to restore and enhance the environment for the next generation, and to leave the environment in a better state than we found it.



© Crown copyright 2022

This information is licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/)

This publication is available at [www.gov.uk/government/publications](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications)

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at

Exotic Disease Policy Response Team (EDPRT) Outbreak Communications Cell

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)

Seacole Building

2 Marsham Street

Westminster

London

SW1P 4DF

UK

[edc.outbreak.comms@defra.gov.uk](mailto:edc.outbreak.comms@defra.gov.uk)

[www.gov.uk/defra](http://www.gov.uk/defra)

## Contents

Background.....	4
Frequently Asked Questions.....	4
Biosecurity.....	4
Vaccination.....	9
Wild Birds.....	10
Bird Gatherings.....	13
Enforcement.....	14
Suspicion and Confirmation of Avian Influenza.....	14
Controls on and surrounding Infected Premises.....	16
Commercial Premises.....	19

# Background

The Avian Influenza 'Stop the Spread' webinar series was hosted by Defra between December 2021 and March 2022 and included updates from Defra policy and Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) epidemiology and veterinary professionals on the 2021/2022 avian influenza (bird flu) outbreak together with advice on the essential biosecurity measures that all bird keepers should be taking to protect the health of their birds and help stop the spread of avian influenza.

Bespoke webinar events were held for smallholder/hobby keepers, commercial keepers and veterinary professionals. Following the presentations from the expert panel members, webinar attendees were able to ask any questions they had regarding the avian influenza outbreak and the biosecurity measure needed to protect their birds. The information provide below summarises the frequently asked questions from the webinar series. All information contained in this document is accurate at the time of publication, for further information on Defra's approach to the control of avian influenza see the [Notifiable Avian Disease Control Strategy for Great Britain](#) and for the latest information on avian influenza and the outbreak see [gov.uk/bird-flu](http://gov.uk/bird-flu).

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Biosecurity

#### **What does biosecurity mean?**

For avian influenza and other avian disease, biosecurity refers to procedures used to prevent the introduction and spread of disease-causing organisms to your birds/flock. Good biosecurity is the essential defence against diseases such as avian influenza and is key to limiting the spread of avian influenza in an outbreak.

#### **What tools do you have to help me assess my biosecurity?**

Biosecurity guidance and a biosecurity self-assessment checklist have been published by Government to assist all bird keepers in instigating and maintaining good biosecurity. These guidance documents are available together with information on the avian influenza latest situation at [gov.uk/bird-flu](http://gov.uk/bird-flu).

In particular, we encourage all bird keepers to complete the [biosecurity self-assessment checklist](#) to audit their own biosecurity and check if there are any areas which can be improved to help protect the health and welfare of their birds. Work is underway to develop further biosecurity audit tools for the commercial sector.

## **How does housing birds help reduce the risk of spread of the avian influenza?**

Housing measures are intended to reduce the risk that poultry and other captive birds will come into contact with wild birds which may be infected with avian influenza.

Housing your birds will also reduce the potential for wild birds to access your birds' feed and water. It will also reduce the risk of poultry and other captive birds coming into contact with wild bird faeces which could carry the avian influenza virus.

Even when birds are housed a risk of infection remains so housing must be coupled with high standards of biosecurity, for example disinfecting clothing and equipment after each use, repairing building defects such as holes in the roof to prevent roosting birds, keeping good records, restricting the access of visitors to your flocks, and changing footwear between different houses/sheds. For further information on biosecurity and how to prevent disease see our biosecurity advice available on [gov.uk/bird-flu](https://www.gov.uk/bird-flu)

## **How often have housing measures been utilised in the past?**

The first mandatory housing measures were introduced as part of the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ) requirements during the avian influenza outbreak in 2016/17. Housing measures were also used as part of the AIPZ requirements during the 2020/2021 outbreak.

During confirmed avian influenza outbreaks housing measures are also routinely applied to poultry and other captive birds within a Protection Zone, which is a 3km zone put in place by the government around an infected premises where highly pathogenic avian influenza has been confirmed to prevent further spread of the virus.

## **What can I do to keep my birds happy while they are kept indoors?**

There are a variety of environmental enrichment options for captive birds, including poultry. It is important that you consider introducing activities for your birds if they are used to having large spaces to roam, as their welfare is very important.

Keep the environment interesting to reduce this risk. Consider adding pecking blocks, fresh bedding, straw bales, and objects such as cabbages, scatter feed or whole grain on the floor of the building and add grit to litter so birds can scratch and carry out natural foraging behaviours. Changing these items when birds lose interest in them will help reduce stress levels and provide mental stimulation for them. However, you must ensure any material added to the birds housing e.g. bedding, perching sticks have been stored before use in such a way that they will not have been contaminated by for example wild bird faecal material.

Guidance for all bird keepers on [biosecurity](#) and preventing welfare impacts in poultry and captive birds has been published and is available together with information on the avian

influenza latest situation. You should discuss specific matters with your private veterinary surgeon.

## **Can bird have a netted off area outdoors if you don't have enough indoor space?**

The housing measures introduced as part of the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ) across the UK on the 29 November 2021 mean that it is a legal requirement for all bird keepers across the UK (whether they have pet birds, commercial flocks or just a few birds in a backyard flock) to keep their birds housed and to follow strict biosecurity measures in order to limit the spread of and eradicate the disease.

However, if it is not possible to meet the basic welfare requirements of particular species by housing for example for zoo birds and geese, steps to prevent contact either directly or indirectly with wild birds must be taken this can include the use of fully netting areas.

If you choose to fully enclose/totally net outdoor areas it is generally recommended that netting should have a maximum mesh size of 25 mm although for exposed areas or where heavy snow fall can be expected, a larger mesh size of up to 50 mm may be appropriate. You should, where appropriate, consult commercial suppliers of netting for advice and further information on equipment.

Ideally to help reduce the risk of bird faeces etc entering the netted area cover the top of the netted area with sheeting or a similar material. You must also take proactive steps to deter wild birds from the area around these netted enclosures.

Further information on [biosecurity](#).

## **Can avian influenza be spread by rodents and how can I reduce the risk?**

Avian influenza virus can be transmitted directly between birds or indirectly by birds coming into contact with environmental contamination, including faeces and feathers from infected birds. Avian influenza isn't typically considered an airborne pathogen.

Rodents such as rats and mice can act as mechanical vectors for avian influenza, picking up contamination in much the same way as human footwear may and transporting into areas where birds can come into contact with the virus (the rodents themselves do not become infected and replicate the virus). You must ensure appropriate rodent control is in place in all areas where birds are kept, in addition to any areas where the birds bedding or feed is kept, to prevent the introduction of avian influenza to your birds.

It is important that rodent infestations are effectively controlled by using an [approved rodenticide](#). When putting measures in place to control rodents you must ensure these do not pose any health risks to your birds or other animals. The Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use has produced useful [Guidance for Rodent Control and the Safe Use of Rodenticides](#).

We encourage all bird keepers to seek professional advice as required on controlling rodents as part of biosecurity measures to halt the spread of the disease.

Further information on [pest control](#).

## **How long does the avian influenza virus survive in the environment?**

The disease spreads by movement of infected birds, and from bird to bird by contact with contaminated body material, fluids, and faeces, either directly or through contaminated objects and surfaces. Avian influenza isn't typically considered to be an airborne disease. At low temperatures, the virus can survive for days, weeks, or even months in the environment. The virus also survives longer in ponds and damp environments. But this is also dependant on virus strain, the surface type, and other variables.

## **What trigger points will be used to determine the lifting of the current housing and/or Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ) restrictions?**

An Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ) came into force across Great Britain on 3 November 2021, and in Northern Ireland on 17 November 2021, with additional housing measures introduced across the UK on the 29 November 2021. This means that it is a legal requirement for all bird keepers across the UK (whether they have pet birds, commercial flocks or just a few birds in a backyard flock) to keep their birds housed and to follow strict biosecurity measures in order to limit the spread of and eradicate the disease.

Any future decisions on disease control measures including the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ) will be based upon a combination of the latest scientific, ornithological and veterinary advice. Risk assessments of this information will assess both the risk of incursion of highly pathogenic (HPAI) avian influenza in wild birds and the risk of exposure of poultry and other captive birds to HPAI across Great Britain at premises where good biosecurity is applied, and at those premises where there are substantial biosecurity breaches and poor biosecurity.

The date for lifting of either the housing measures component of the AIPZ or the AIPZ in its entirety, are kept under regular review, and will be lifted once the risk has reduced sufficiently.

Further information on the evidence that underpinned the decisions regarding the AIPZ, and the housing measures can be found in Defra and the Animal and Plant Health Agencies (APHA's) risk assessments available on GOV.UK:

- [Scientific Opinion on the effectiveness of a housing order and Risk Assessment for GB.](#)
- Rapid risk assessments on incursion of H5Nx HPAI into housed or not housed poultry flocks and captive birds

These documents are reviewed and updated regularly. For the latest information, see our [Avian influenza \(bird flu\) in Europe, Russia and in the UK](#) page.

## **Is this just going to become business as usual every winter? What can bird keepers do if it does?**

At present, it is too early to say how many years this virus will continue to circulate in the UK. Historically, when this type of event has occurred in Europe, virus may still circulate for several years.

Defra's objective in tackling any outbreak of avian influenza is to eradicate the disease as quickly as possible from the UK's poultry and captive bird population and regain UK disease-free status. We carry out routine surveillance of disease risks in the UK and around the world to help us anticipate future threats to animal health. We will continue to closely monitor the global avian influenza situation as part of this work.

All bird keepers should continue to observe the high standards of biosecurity as this is an essential defence against disease outbreaks and can help prevent the incursion and spread of avian influenza.

## **What about access to nature reserves and footpaths? I have seen no evidence of prevention or protection at a nearby site.**

The countryside remains open for business. Avian influenza is a different disease from Foot and Mouth: it does not spread readily through the air and there is normally no animal health reason for limiting public access other than in the immediate vicinity of the infected premises. Public access to footpaths on the premises where disease has been found is therefore restricted. Such access would only be permitted under licence from the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA).

However we advise the public and in particular bird keepers to take a precautionary approach to help protect both wild birds and poultry and other captive birds from avian influenza. Do not touch sick or dead wild birds. Avian influenza virus can be spread indirectly through environmental contamination e.g. bird faeces. To minimise the risk of spreading contamination between areas, where possible keep to the footpath and keep dogs on a lead. If you keep poultry or other birds, clean and disinfect your footwear (or ideally use dedicated footwear) before tending to your birds.

## **Do we only need to record visitors who access poultry or all visitors to the house / farm even if no access to poultry areas?**

Records of all of all vehicles that enter any part of the premises where poultry or other captive birds are kept and of all people who come into any direct contact with the birds or the area, they are kept in must be kept and made available to an inspector or veterinary inspector on demand. This is both best practice with regards to biosecurity and also a legal requirement under the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ). Records do not need to be kept of visitors who have no access and/or contact with to bird keeping areas or the birds themselves.



## **I am a poultry keeper how do I register my flock / check my registration is up to date with APHA?**

We encourage all keepers to register their birds with the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) on the [Great Britain Poultry Register](#) - regardless of the number of birds you keep and ensure your contact details are up to date including ideally both a mobile number and email address and correct CPH details. However, registration is compulsory if you keep over 50 poultry at any time during the year. Poultry includes chickens, ducks, turkeys, geese, pigeon (bred for meat), partridge, quail, guinea fowl and pheasants.

If you need help completing the registration forms or want to check or change any of your details, you can contact the Great Britain (GB) Poultry Register helpline on 0800 634 1112. Lines are open 08:30 to 17:00 Monday to Friday or email [Customer.Registration@apha.gov.uk](mailto:Customer.Registration@apha.gov.uk)

In addition, in GB all bird keepers and interested individuals can sign up to receive free alerts through [APHA's disease alerts service](#) which notifies subscribers when there is an exotic notifiable animal disease outbreak in Great Britain. You do not need to sign up to receive disease alerts for notifiable poultry diseases if you are registered on the GB poultry register.

## **Vaccination**

### **Why is vaccination not used as a control measure during an avian influenza outbreak?**

In England it is Defra's current policy to not permit the vaccination of birds (outside of zoos) as an immediate disease control response. Stamping out coupled with a high standard of biosecurity, separation of poultry from wild birds and careful surveillance for signs of disease remain the most effective means of controlling the disease and protecting other animals. This policy is in line with international standards of best practice for disease control.

Currently available avian influenza vaccines have disadvantages in that while they may reduce mortality, it is possible that some vaccinated birds would still be capable of transmitting the disease if they became infected whilst not displaying symptoms. This would increase the time taken to detect and eradicate the virus.

However avian influenza vaccination policy is kept under regular review in light of any scientific developments in the availability of effective vaccines. See our guidance on [avian influenza vaccination](#).

## Are commercial vaccines available for avian influenza and who can use them?

The vaccination of poultry and most captive birds against avian influenza is not currently permitted. Vaccination is not a routine control measure and is a practice restricted by legislation. Vaccination of zoo birds is only permitted in England subject to meeting eligibility criteria and receiving authorisation. Only zoos or collections holding a current zoo licence can apply for an authorisation to vaccinate.

There are currently two commercial avian influenza vaccines authorised by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) for use in the UK. Further information on these vaccines is available via the [VMD Product Information Database search page](#) by searching for 'Avian Influenza', in the Active substance tab.

These vaccines are unlikely to provide full protection for the current strains of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) circulating in Europe and in wild birds in the UK. Licensed zoos who wish to apply for authorisation to vaccinate, must consult their vet and manufacturer for further advice on vaccine suitability.

Only zoos or collections in England holding a current [Zoo Licence](#) can apply for an authorisation to vaccinate. In England authorisation to vaccinate must be sought from the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA). For further information contact [CSCOneHealthAISurvey@apha.gov.uk](mailto:CSCOneHealthAISurvey@apha.gov.uk).

## Wild Birds

### What measures are taking place to monitor the disease in wild birds?

The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) carries out year-round avian influenza surveillance of dead wild birds submitted via public reports and warden patrols. As part of this on-going surveillance, there have been multiple findings of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) H5N1 in wild birds from sites across GB.

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has said that avian influenza is primarily a disease of birds and the risk to the general public's health is very low. However, do not touch or pick up any dead or visibly sick birds that you find. We advise the public to report dead wild waterfowl (swans, geese or ducks) or other dead wild birds, such as gulls or birds of prey, to the Defra helpline (03459 335577).

APHA and their contractors then collect some of these birds and test them for avian influenza to help government understand how the disease is distributed geographically and in different types of bird, not all birds will be collected.

APHA publish a report (updated weekly) on [findings of highly pathogenic avian influenza \(bird flu\) in wild birds in Great Britain](#).

Further details of the latest avian influenza findings in wild birds in Europe can be found in our [outbreak assessments](#).

## **What wild birds are target species for avian influenza surveillance?**

All species of wild bird will be considered for collection as part of the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) found dead wild bird surveillance programme, however the target species are wild waterfowl, such as swans, geese and ducks, gulls, or birds of prey. These are species which have been found to be infected with avian influenza across Europe.

These include species such as:

- Ducks: Tufted, Common Teal, Eurasian Wigeon, eider, pochard, goldeneye.
- Geese: brent, greylag, barnacle.
- Swans: mute, whooper, Bewick's.

Do not touch or pick up any dead or visibly sick birds that you find. If you find dead wild waterfowl (swans, geese, or ducks) or other dead wild birds, such as gulls or birds of prey, you should report them to the Defra helpline (03459 335577). APHA and their contractors will then collect some of these birds and test them to help us understand how the disease is distributed geographically and in different types of bird.

Wild bird species in which highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) has been found can be viewed in [APHA surveillance report](#) which is updated weekly.

## **What time of year does the UK face the highest risk from migratory wild birds introducing avian influenza?**

An avian influenza outbreak can occur at any point in the year. However, the UK typically faces a seasonal increase in the risk of an avian influenza incursion associated with the winter migration patterns of wild birds to the UK.

In late autumn/early winter two migration pathways have the potential to carry avian influenza infected wild birds to the UK, typically wild migratory waterfowl:

- The first is the Black Sea Mediterranean pathway, which is also linked to case in the Middle East (Israel) as birds move from Europe to Africa at this time of year; European countries along this route would also include those in Central and Southern Europe.
- The second is the East Atlantic route which includes the North European countries, particularly Scandinavia, Germany, Denmark, Poland and GB.

There are no clear boundaries between these migration routes and the birds will mix between them and multiple waterfowl species can be found at the same sites.

The infected wild waterfowl can then subsequently infect sedentary (non-migratory) wild bird species resulting in local transmission and/or contaminate their surrounding

environment e.g. wild bird faecal contamination of range areas or on poultry bedding housed outside. Hence why the risk of avian influenza is not solely connected to the presence of infected migratory wild birds.

The risk of introduction into poultry or other captive birds will depend on the prevalence and pattern of virus shedding in wild birds, the level of biosecurity in place on premises and other factors. Adverse weather events such as flooding can also significantly increase the risk of incursion on flood affected premises.

However, the risk of avian influenza incursion during summer typically decreases as environmental conditions (warm dry, high sunlight exposure) can reduce virus survival in the environment e.g. on contaminated ranges.

Government and its agencies including the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) carry out routine surveillance of disease risks in the UK and around the world to help us anticipate future threats to animal health and continue to closely monitor the global situation of avian influenza and its potential impact on the UK as part of this work.

Further details of the evidence that supports the assessments of the risk of incursion of avian influenza into the UK and details of the latest avian influenza findings in wild birds in the UK and Europe can be found in the [outbreak assessments](#).

## **Can I still feed wild birds?**

The feeding of wild birds in the open is not prohibited either through the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ) measures or other legislation. However, some wild birds, particularly waterfowl such as ducks, geese, swans, and gulls, are known to be carrying avian influenza. We encourage anyone feeding birds to do so responsibly and not feed them in the vicinity or on the same premises as poultry or other captive birds.

## **If we face a seasonal threat of avian influenza from migratory wild birds what is the point of the control measures?**

Defra's objective in tackling any outbreak of avian influenza is to eradicate the disease as quickly as possible from the UK's poultry and captive-bird population and regain UK [World Organisation for Animal Health \(OIE\) disease-free status](#). This both facilitates trade in poultry, captive birds and poultry products but also protects the health and welfare of all kept birds.

Our approach is set out in the Notifiable Avian Disease Control Strategy for Great Britain. Swift and humane culling of birds on infected premises coupled with good biosecurity is to prevent the amplification of avian influenza and subsequent environmental contamination and to reduce the risk of disease spread from infected premises. This policy is in line with international standards of best practice for disease control. It reflects our experience of responding to past outbreaks of exotic animal disease.

Defra's disease control measures seek to contain the number of animals that need to be culled, either for disease control purposes or to safeguard animal welfare. We aim to reduce adverse impacts on the rural and wider economy, the public, rural communities and the environment, whilst protecting public health and minimising the overall cost of any outbreak.

## Bird Gatherings

### Does the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone / housing measures mean that bird gatherings can no longer take place?

Controls on bird gatherings are made through amending / revoking the bird gatherings general licence and not through any of the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ) measures.

Gatherings include (but are not limited to) bird fairs, markets, shows, sales, exhibitions, and some premises used for dealing or internet sales. In addition, vehicles used to transport live birds where the birds are brought together from multiple premises (so called many-to-one or many-to-many activities) are also considered gatherings.

Bird gatherings are not permitted within a disease control zone, outside of these areas bird gatherings are only permitted if licensed. Keepers can check the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) [interactive map](#) to see the location of disease control zones currently in force.

Bird gathering general licences have been made available by Defra, Scottish Government and Welsh Government permitting bird gatherings in England, Scotland, and Wales respectively including in areas where an enhanced Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ) with housing measures is in place (but not in disease control zones surrounding infected premises), provided they have been notified to the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) at least 7 days before the event and that the gathering meets all the requirements of the relevant general licence.

However, at the time of publication the bird gatherings general licence currently available each of the three GB administrations **do not permit gatherings of poultry** (Galliformes or Anseriformes birds). Galliforme birds include pheasants, partridge, quail, chickens, turkey, and guinea fowl. Anseriforme birds include ducks, geese, and swans. Gatherings of all other types of birds including pigeons/bird of prey are still permitted, provided that the APHA has been notified of the gathering at least 7 days before the event and that the gathering meets all the requirements of the general licence.

Further [guidance for bird gatherings](#) has been published on GOV.UK. Definitive requirements are set out in the published General License for the relevant administration ([England](#), [Wales](#) and [Scotland](#)).

The status of the bird gatherings general license will be kept under regular review as part of the government's work to monitor and manage the risks of avian influenza, and any decisions on amending or withdrawing the general license will be based on [risk assessments](#) containing the latest scientific and ornithological evidence and veterinary advice.

## Enforcement

### Who is responsible for enforcement of the housing measures?

Avian influenza controls including the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ) and housing measures are enforced by the Local Authority Animal Health Function (LAAHF), which is normally situated with the Trading Standards or Environmental Health Service of a local authority. See our [postcode tool](#) to find details of how to contact your LAAHF with any reports of non-compliance. Local authorities will take a proportionate approach to non-compliance in place

## Suspicion and Confirmation of Avian Influenza

### Should I take sick poultry or other captive birds to my private veterinary surgeon's practice?

If you are concerned about any signs of disease in your animals, you should consult your private veterinary surgeon promptly. Avian influenza is a notifiable animal disease. If you suspect any type of avian influenza in poultry or captive birds, you or your vet must report it immediately to Government by calling in England the Defra Rural Services Helpline on 03000 200 301. In Wales, contact 0300 303 8268. In Scotland, contact your [local Field Services Office](#). Failure to do so is an offence. See our guidance on the [clinical signs of avian influenza](#).

Due to the heightened risk of avian influenza at present even where avian influenza is not suspected the general advice is not to bring individual sick poultry into the consulting rooms or practice of your private veterinary surgeon, OK for other caged pet birds e.g. canaries, budgerigars - but not poultry. If brought in for treatment, they should be kept in an area where there are no other birds. Follow the advice of your vet with regards to whether to bring your bird to their practice. Where clinical signs of avian influenza are not suspected, the bird(s) should be clinically treated as appropriate and according to a practice-based avian influenza risk assessment. Considerations for ongoing care within your vets practice may include:

- species of bird treated
- available isolation facilities
- practice layout
- number of birds routinely treated by the practice

### How do you confirm / diagnose avian influenza?

While suspicion of avian influenza can be on the basis of the clinical picture in birds or known or suspected contact with another infected premises. The presence of avian influenza can only be confirmed through laboratory tests. Testing is conducted by Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) avian influenza experts at our national reference laboratory, where several tests are carried out to both confirm results and establish both

the strain and pathogenicity of the avian influenza virus. These tests are specific to avian influenza.

A Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO) from the relevant UK administration will confirm a case of notifiable avian influenza if a UKAS (the National Accreditation Body for the United Kingdom) validated test (typically PCR or virus isolation) undertaken at the UK national Reference Laboratory for avian influenza have demonstrated the presence of either Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) or Low Pathogenic Avian Influenza (LPAI) of the H5 or H7 strain.

## **Do birds recover from infection with avian influenza?**

The clinical signs of avian influenza infection in birds range in their severity, but highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) can be fatal and is typically fatal in chickens, turkeys and other Galliformes. Euthanasia / humane culling is an essential measure to prevent disease spread and is often the most appropriate course of action for the welfare of the birds.

## **What advice for veterinarians regarding avian influenza is available?**

Further information for veterinarians on avian influenza and other notifiable avian diseases is available via the [Animal and Plant Health Agency \(APHA\) Vet Gateway](#).

The British Veterinary Association (BVA) have published in conjunction with British Veterinary Poultry Association (BVPA), British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA), British Veterinary Zoological Society (BVZS) and APHA [guidance for vets dealing with wild birds and backyard poultry during the avian influenza outbreak](#).

In addition, further information on backyard poultry is available in the British Small Animal Veterinary Association's (BSAVA) ['Avian influenza in backyard poultry' Q&A](#) and their collection in the [BSAVA Library](#).

## **Are rare / pure / exhibition poultry breeds susceptible to avian influenzas?**

Yes, rare breeds of poultry are just as susceptible to avian influenza as more common commercial breeds of poultry.

## **What is the procedure if Avian Influenza is found in a flock with rare or endangered bird species?**

A limited set of options for derogation exist that would allow birds to be spared from culling at an infected premises. Any decisions on culling vulnerable, endangered, critically endangered or extinct in the wild (as listed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)) or rare birds (as listed on the [UK Breeds at Risk List](#) compiled by the [Farm Animal Genetic Resources \(FAnGR\) Committee](#)) on an infected premises would be made

on the basis of a risk assessment. Birds not culled would need to be kept in isolation and will be subject to further surveillance and testing and not be allowed to move off the premises (unless licensed) until laboratory tests indicate that they no longer pose a risk to the further spread of the avian influenza.

## **Has this outbreak affected any birds of prey?**

Yes, birds of prey are susceptible to avian influenza and can be infected if exposed. Good biosecurity is essential to prevent the risk of exposure in kept birds of prey. Through the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) found dead wild bird surveillance programme several species of wild birds of prey including Common Buzzards, Goshawks, Kestrels, Peregrine Falcons, Red Kites, Sparrowhawks and a Sea Eagle have been found positive for the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) H5N1 strain present in the UK during 2021/2022.

Due to the heightened risk of avian influenza infection in wild birds we advise against feeding any wild birds, and in particular any wild shot or hunted wildfowl, to any birds of prey. This includes birds that may have been shot or hunted earlier in the autumn/winter and frozen, since the virus can remain viable in frozen carcasses for at least 12 months.

## **Controls on and surrounding Infected Premises**

### **What is Government doing to stop the spread of disease from infected premises?**

At each of the premises where notifiable avian influenza has been confirmed, a notifiable disease investigation will have been immediately initiated following reports of a suspect case, and a government vet visited the premises and restrictions put in place at the premises.

All birds at each of the infected premises are humanely culled to limit the spread of the disease. All carcasses are disposed of by rendering or incineration, complying with strict biosecurity standards. This follows a similar approach to that successfully used for the disposal of carcasses during previous outbreaks of exotic animal disease.

In addition, disease control zones are put in place surrounding the infected premises. In these disease control zones, certain movements of poultry, other captive birds, eggs, poultry products or materials associated with their keeping, or mammals from or to premises where poultry or other captive birds are kept, are not permitted. This is to control further disease spread.

A veterinary investigation will be undertaken at each infected premises to identify at each of the premises, as far as possible:

- how long the disease may have been present on the premises;
- the likely source of infection;
- whether any other premises may have been exposed to the disease as a result of the cases.



## Why do you need to cull birds on infected premises?

Swift and humane culling of birds on infected premises coupled with good biosecurity is used to prevent the amplification of avian influenza and subsequent environmental contamination, reduce the risk of disease spread from infected premises and mitigate any public health risk these infected birds may pose. Current policy is in line with international standards of best practice for disease control.

## What method is being used for the humane killing?

To prevent further spread of avian influenza, birds on an infected premises are humanely culled.

For large poultry (including game birds and other poultry species) premises, gassing of birds is the preferred option, either by containerised gassing units or whole house gassing (where poultry houses are suitable, and the technology is available).

For smaller numbers of birds (e.g. a backyard flock, or a small collection of other captive birds) or for larger or flightless birds, individual techniques such as neck dislocation, percussion/electrical stunning or lethal injection may be more appropriate. Maceration may be used for day old chicks.

The carcasses from birds which are culled for disease control purposes do not enter the food chain. The Animal & Plant Health Agency (APHA) arrange for these carcasses of culled birds to be bio-securely disposed of by incineration or rendering.

Further information on Defra's policy on culling & disposal is set out in [Defra's Contingency Plan for Exotic Notifiable Diseases of Animals in England](#) and the [Notifiable Avian Disease Control Strategy for Great Britain](#).

## How do can I find out about cases in my area and if I am in a disease control zone?

Keepers can check where disease control zones are located in GB and if they are in zone on the [Animal and Plant Health Agency \(APHA\) interactive map](#).

Further information on cases and details of the measures that apply in the disease control zones currently in force can be found on the relevant administrations website:

- [England](#)
- [Wales](#)
- [Scotland](#)

In addition, the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) operates two systems, a subscription service and a notification system through the [GB Poultry Register](#), for notifying bird keepers and members of the public regarding notifiable animal disease outbreaks. Foot

patrols by local authority and APHA staff together with postal surveys are also carried out to ensure all premises within zones are identified and contacted.

GB Poultry Register: All keepers should [register their poultry](#), even if only kept as pets, so the APHA can contact keepers during an outbreak. This is a legal requirement if keepers have 50 or more poultry (Poultry includes chickens, ducks, turkeys, geese, pigeon (bred for meat), partridge, quail, guinea fowl and pheasants). To ensure APHA can contact keepers in disease control zones promptly, all keepers should ensure their poultry register entry is up to date including correct County Parish Holding (CPH) numbers and contact details ideally both a mobile phone number and email address.

For anyone interested in animal diseases, not just diseases of poultry, they may also wish to sign up for free text and/or email alerts on national disease outbreaks by signing up to [APHA's subscription service](#)

## **When can Disease Control Zones surrounding an infected premises be lifted?**

As a minimum Protection Zones can only be ended 21 days after preliminary cleansing and disinfection at the infected premises is deemed effective. While the earliest date a Surveillance Zone can be lifted, and local movement restrictions removed, is 30 days after preliminary cleansing and disinfection at the infected premises is deemed effective. However, disease control zones are only lifted only once all disease control and surveillance activities in the zones have been successfully completed and there are no suspect cases under investigation in the zones. Further cases within the disease control zones will also reset the clock for zone lifting. All bird keepers and in particular any commercial keepers, should have in place contingency plans for if they are located within a disease control zone.

Although disease control restrictions can end after 30 days, trade restrictions remain in place for at least 90 days. During this period government is required to undertake enhanced surveillance including visits to poultry and captive bird premises so if you are in one of these zones you may be contacted at any time during the 90 day period to advise that you have been selected (at random) for a surveillance visit.

## **What is the procedure for cleansing and disinfection at infected premises and who pays for this?**

Following the confirmation of notifiable avian influenza at an infected premises and the completion of all culling and disposal activities, the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) will carry out preliminary cleansing and disinfection (C&D) at the infected premises. The costs for culling, disposal and the preliminary cleansing and disinfection are paid by the government.

An infected premises cannot be restocked until full secondary C&D has been completed or at least 12 months from the date of preliminary disinfection have elapsed.

If the occupier of the premises chooses to undertake secondary C&D rather than wait 12 months to restock, the occupier is responsible under APHA supervision for the secondary C&D process and its cost. Where an owner/keeper opts to undertake secondary C&D, a written plan for the work is completed by the owner/keeper and agreed with APHA, setting out in detail how the various actions will be carried out and which approved disinfectants will be used. APHA will sign a certificate of final C&D once works have been completed by the owner or keeper.

The secondary C&D process involves cleansing, degreasing, and disinfecting, and then repeating the process one week later to ensure that the notifiable virus on the premises is eliminated as far as possible. Once APHA is satisfied with the work, sentinel birds can be introduced under a licence issued by APHA for restocking after 21 days. During the 21 days following repopulation, birds will undergo official examination by an APHA vet. Sampling for laboratory testing may be carried out. Restrictions on the premises will remain in place until at least the completion of clinical surveillance showing no evidence of infection and any samples taken have returned negative test results for the relevant disease.

During the monitoring period, birds must be sampled by an Official Veterinarian (OV) appointed by the keeper, the costs relating to this sampling (including costs of the OV, packaging and sample transport) are at the owner's expense. Laboratory costs for the testing of samples from live and dead birds are met by Government.

## Commercial Premises

### **What's the risk of the virus entering the shed through inlet fans?**

The disease spreads by movement of infected birds, and from bird to bird by contact with contaminated body fluids and faeces, either directly or through contaminated objects and surfaces. Avian influenza isn't typically considered an airborne pathogen. Depending on the ventilation system design, the greatest concern is that wild birds may be able gain access to sheds through the inlets.

### **Should we think of implementing showering in/out if we don't currently do this?**

Avian influenza can easily be transported on a human's clothes, shoes, skin, and hair into bird keeping areas where it can go on to potentially infect birds (fomite transmission). In order to minimise this risk many indoor-reared commercial facilities utilise shower in and shower out protocols at the boundary to their 'biosecure zone' as part of their biosecurity program, this can also be a requirement of membership of some assurance schemes.

Shower in/out protocols can reduce the risk of introducing avian influenza into bird keeping areas over and above the risk reduction gained from footwear/clothing change only protocols. However both the design of changing room, showers and associated hygiene

facilities and the protocols associated with their use must be appropriate and abidance with protocols enforced to ensure their effectiveness.

The facility must be designed in such a way that it is not possible to pass without going through the shower. There should be a sequence of cubicles for leaving bags and footwear and removal of outdoor clothing, whole body shower, and putting on clean, dedicated 'biosecure zone' clothing. All staff and visitors should receive induction training and regular refresher training on the entry and exit procedures that must be used. Management protocols must contain instructions that if any person passes out of the biosecure zone for any reason, they must go through the full shower and clothing change procedure before re-entering. In addition, consideration must be made to how equipment, tools etc are brought into the biosecure zone beyond the shower, including provision of appropriate cleansing and disinfection facilities.

### **Are disease control restrictions on a processing plant disproportionate when they are processing healthy birds?**

Disease control zones are put in place around the infected premises. Within the zones, movement of poultry is not allowed and movements of eggs, poultry carcasses and poultry litter/manure are subject to restrictions. The purpose of movement restrictions is to reduce the risk of the spread of disease to other birds in the vicinity of the infected premises and to quickly establish whether this occurred prior to the disease being confirmed (through surveillance within the zones).

All businesses should have a contingency plan for responding both to disease outbreaks on their premises and in the event, they are located in a disease control zone.

All necessary steps will be taken on the basis of ongoing monitoring and surveillance of the situation on the ground and advice from relevant experts. Current measures are proportionate and in line with EU (in relation to trade requirements) and national law. Our aim is to limit the spread and the economic impact of this disease on the industry.

### **Is there any alteration to the requirements for disposing poultry waste?**

The Avian Influenza Prevention Zones (AIPZ) does not introduce any specific requirements with regard to the disposal of poultry waste. However, when disease control zones are put in place around the infected premises movements of poultry waste is subject to restrictions.

Within Protection Zones, Surveillance Zones and Temporary Control Zones poultry litter, poultry manure or poultry slurry cannot be removed from premises with the zone or spread unless licensed.

Within both Protection Zones, Surveillance Zones, Temporary Control Zones and Captive Bird Monitoring (Controlled) Zones anyone who moves any poultry, other captive bird, manure, slurry or litter or any other thing which may be contaminated must cleanse and

disinfect the vehicle and any equipment used to transport that thing as soon as it is unloaded.

All bird keepers and in particular commercial keepers should have in place contingency plans to manage their poultry waste in the event they are caught in a disease control zone.

## **What about egg sales?**

The Food Standards Agency has said that on the basis of the current scientific evidence, avian influenza poses a very low food safety risk for UK consumers. The advice to the public is that properly cooked poultry and poultry products, including eggs, are safe to eat.

However there are some restrictions associated with the movement or sale of eggs under the requirements of the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ):

- Records of poultry, captive birds and egg movements must be kept and made available to an inspector or veterinary inspector on demand.
- Records should include:
  - the quantity and description (including species of bird or type of egg) transported or marketed;
  - the date of the movement off the premises;
  - the premises of destination (if known);
  - the name and address of the person to whom ownership or possession is being or has been transferred;
- egg producers should ensure the packing, handling and storage of second quality eggs / farm seconds is managed in a biosecure manner.
- Plastic egg trays must be cleansed and disinfected (using a Defra-approved poultry disinfectant at the correct dilution rate) before use and records maintained as detailed above.

Additional control measures apply in disease control zones surrounding infected premises including:

- Within 3km Protection Zone or 3km (Area A) Temporary Control Zone eggs must not be moved without a licence with the exception of table eggs which may be moved to wholesale, retail premises or subsequent movements (e.g. when purchased by consumers)
- Within 10km Surveillance Zone or 10km (Area B) Temporary Control Zone you must keep a record of all poultry or poultry eggs entering or leaving premises within the zone, except where eggs are being moved direct to wholesale or retail premises or onwards from such premises (such as consumers);
- Within Captive Bird (Monitoring) Controlled Zones you must keep a record of all poultry or poultry eggs entering or leaving premises within the zone, except where eggs are being moved direct to wholesale or retail premises or onwards from such premises (such as consumers).

- In any disease control zone anyone involved in the transport or marketing of poultry or poultry eggs must also make a record of all those transported or marketed (some exemptions including retail and consumer movements of table eggs).

A [General licence for the movement of table eggs into, within or out of a Protection or within or out of a Surveillance Zone in Scotland or England](#) has been made available.

### **Is egg packing material being tested to check that avian influenza is not being transferred?**

Egg packing material is not being routinely tested for avian influenza contamination; however it is a legal requirement under the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ) that all egg producers should ensure the packing, handling and storage of second quality eggs / farm seconds is managed in a biosecure manner and that plastic egg trays must be cleansed and disinfected (using a [Defra-approved poultry disinfectant](#) at the correct dilution rate) before use and records maintained.