



Our Ref: ATIC3026

[REDACTED]
{By Email}

20 March 2023

Dear [REDACTED]

PROVISION OF REQUESTED INFORMATION

Thank you for your request for information about avian influenza, which the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) received on 02 March 2023. Your request has been handled under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000

The information you requested and the response is detailed below:

“On 26 Feb 2023, DEFRA reported that there have been 174 cases of avian influenza (H5N1) in the UK since October 2022 and 108 cases of avian influenza between October 2021 and October 2022. Please supply the following information.

1. How many cases of H5N1 have occurred in captive birds between 7 Nov 2022 and 26 Feb 2023?”

69

2. “How many cases of H5N1 have been recorded in wild birds between 7 Nov 2022 and 26 Feb 2023?”

565

3. “Other than the PCR test, what other tests are conducted on a captive bird with suspected H5N1, in order to ascertain its condition?”

Virus isolation in embryonated fowls’ eggs may be performed on the clinical samples in order to isolate live virus.

Whole genome sequencing is performed on samples testing positive by PCR (and virus isolation) to determine not only that the virus is HPAIV H5N1 but also was particular lineage the virus belongs to.

For non-galliforme species (Galliformes being turkeys, chickens, quail, and other land-feeding birds), bloods may be submitted for testing. With these, the haemagglutination test (HAIT) is used to look for antibodies to subtype H5 avian influenza virus which would indicate previous exposure to H5 virus.

4." In the event of a suspected case of H5N1 in a captive bird, what tests are conducted on the bird's supply of water and feed?"

Not held - APHA do not carry out tests on Water of feed

5. "In the event of a suspected case of H5N1 in a captive bird, what tests are conducted on the bird's blood, to detect any toxicity?"

Not held. APHA do not perform toxicity tests on the bird's blood. Only HAIT is performed as described in question 3.

6. "In the event of a suspected case of H5N1 in a captive bird, what tests are conducted for environmental toxicity in the immediate area?"

Not held - APHA do not carry out tests on environment

7. "What is the total poultry figure, registered with APHA, currently?"

396,401,101

Included are what is commonly considered to be *poultry*, so it does not include all types of birds (e.g., Aviary Birds, Birds of Prey, are excluded). The full list of what is included is below: Chicken, Duck, Goose, Guinea Fowl, Ostrich, Partridges, Pheasant, Quail, Turkey, Rhea, and Pigeons bred for Meat.

APHA register keepers of animals and poultry for disease control purposes. The information we do hold is the average stock numbers passed to the APHA when a premises is initially registered or when the record is updated. Poultry registrations are mandatory for over 50 birds but voluntary for under 50. More information on the registration process can be found here:

[Poultry \(including game birds\): registration rules and forms - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

8. "By what process has the existence of H5N1 been proven?"

Many factors including epidemiological surveillance, pathology and post-mortem examination, and the findings from the laboratory investigation including the results from PCR, serology (HAIT – referred to in question 3), virus isolation and whole genome sequencing.

9. "Has a complete decoding of the genetic material of H5N1 taken place?"

Yes

10. "By what process has it been proven that H5N1 has a pathogenic effect on birds?"

Mass mortality following infection in both poultry and wild bird species. Severe and aggressive pathological findings (such as necrosis) following post-mortem examination of carcasses.

11. "How many calls has the DEFRA Rural Services Helpline received, with reports of suspected cases of Avian Influenza H5N1 between 1 Oct 2022 and 26 Feb 2023?"

The table below shows the number of calls passed to our Customer Duty Vets between October 2022 and February 2023 regarding suspicion of Avian Influenza (AI) or customers seeking further advice from our Vets regarding Avian Influenza.

Month	Suspicion of AI	Advice Sought AI
Oct-22	73	171
Nov-22	42	229
Dec-22	14	85
Jan-23	11	48
Feb-23	10	79

Information disclosed in response to this FOI request is releasable to the public. In keeping with the spirit and effect of the FOI and the government's Transparency Agenda, this letter and the information disclosed to you may be placed on GOV.UK, together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context. No information identifying you will be placed on the GOV.UK website.

An Annex is attached which explains the copyright that applies to the information being released to you and contact details should you be unhappy with the service you have received.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact the Access to Information Team at the email address below or postal address at the top of this letter.

Yours sincerely

ACCESS TO INFORMATION TEAM

Email: enquiries@apha.gov.uk

Annex

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Complaints

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request, you may make a complaint or appeal against our decision under section 17(7) of the FOIA or under regulation 11 of the EIRs, as applicable, within 40 working days of the date of this letter. Please write to the Access to Information Manager at the address at the top of this letter or email enquiries@apha.gov.uk and the team will arrange for an internal review of your case.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, section 50 of the FOIA and regulation 18 of the EIRs gives you the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) for a decision. Please note that generally the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have first exhausted APHA's own complaints procedure. The ICO can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Please click [here](#) for further contact details.