

Avian influenza (bird flu) controls

Rules on meat produced from poultry and farmed game birds originating in Disease Control Zones

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Contents

| | |
|--|----------|
| Rules on meat produced from poultry and farmed game birds originating in Disease Control Zones | 1 |
| Summary | 2 |
| Legal basis for this guidance | 2 |
| Restricted and unrestricted meat | 3 |
| Requirements of restricted meat..... | 4 |
| Movement of restricted meat and products..... | 6 |
| Requirements for premises to process meat during an outbreak..... | 6 |
| Disposal of waste and animal by-products..... | 7 |
| On-farm slaughtering and exemptions from identification and health marking..... | 7 |
| Table of key dates | 8 |
| HPAI outbreaks from November 2024 | 8 |
| Legal references | 9 |

Summary

This document applies to food business operators (FBOs) (excluding distributors and retailers) following the declaration of protection and surveillance zones to control Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI). A table of the key dates related to zones declared is included in this document.

It provides an explanation of the specific rules to be followed for any meat produced from poultry or farmed game birds originating within the Protection Zone(s) and the designation of slaughterhouses.

The rules relate to the marking, separation and movement of meat intended for human consumption.

We make these rules to reduce animal health risks. Other meat including poultry not originating within the Protection Zone (PZ) is unaffected.

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) advises that, based on scientific evidence, avian influenza poses a very low food safety risk for consumers. Properly cooked poultry and poultry products remain safe to eat.

This document only applies in respect of an outbreak of HPAI in poultry and is not a definitive statement of the law. The precise requirements are set out in legislation and the general licenses we have issued.

Meat from poultry or farmed game birds originating within the PZ can be moved or sold, subject to several conditions.

These include a requirement that the health mark is replaced with a specific mark which must remain with it throughout any processing or repackaging. In England the mark is approved by the Secretary of State at the outset of each new outbreak. In Wales the mark is approved by the Welsh ministers.

Under some specific circumstances, the recipient of poultry meat is permitted to remove the specific mark temporarily for production, and in some circumstance not to re-apply it.

Legal basis for this guidance

The following legislation is relevant to these outbreaks of HPAI:

- [The Avian Influenza and Influenza of Avian Origin in Mammals \(England\) \(Number 2\) Order 2006](#)
- [The Avian Influenza and Influenza of Avian Origin in Mammals \(Wales\) \(Number 2\) Order 2006](#)

Restricted and unrestricted meat

The term “**restricted meat**” is used to mean:

- meat from poultry originating from a PZ
- meat from poultry originating from an area that subsequently became a PZ and was slaughtered **within** 20 or fewer days of the date estimated by a veterinary inspector as being the earliest date of infection at a premises in the relevant zone. This date may change as the epidemiology of the outbreak develops. A list of dates is provided in the Table of key dates below
- meat that has not been kept separate from the previous 2 categories
- any meat, processed meat or meat products derived from any of the above

To help businesses the dates which apply to restricted meat will be published online. This date may change as the epidemiology of the outbreak develops.

The term “**unrestricted meat**” is used to mean:

- meat from poultry originating outside of a PZ or
- meat from poultry originating in an area that subsequently became a PZ but was slaughtered at least 21 days **before** the date estimated by a veterinary inspector as being the earliest date of infection at a premises in the relevant PZ. This date may change as the epidemiology of the outbreak develops. A list of dates is provided in the [Table of key dates](#) below
- any meat falling into the restricted meat category that has been heat treated to at least 70°C throughout by an approved establishment (in accordance with Article 4 of Regulations (EC) No 853/2004) becomes unrestricted meat and can be marked with the oval identification mark

There are no special measures for meat produced from wild game birds during an outbreak of HPAI **in poultry**, thus all such meat is unrestricted¹.

Meat from birds slaughtered after the lifting of the PZ will be unrestricted meat.

However, meat from any birds slaughtered before the PZ is lifted and falling under the definition of restricted meat will remain restricted, as will any meat that is subsequently not kept separate from restricted meat.

¹ Additional measures may be introduced for outbreaks of HPAI which will be published at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/avian-influenza-bird-flu> alongside this document

Requirements of restricted meat

Restricted meat must be marked with a special mark by an approved establishment. The special mark must then be carried throughout the chain (see illustration below).

The special mark must not be removed except under the terms of the licence EXD 264(HPAI)(EW)² which allows for the removal and reapplication of the mark for processing and repackaging.

FBO receiving live poultry, farmed game or farmed game carcasses from a PZ must ensure that meat from those birds is obtained, cut, transported, and stored separately from other meat.

Restricted meat which is fully packaged and correctly marked might be stored and transported alongside packaged unrestricted meat.

Restricted meat which is not fully packaged must not be stored or transported alongside unrestricted meat, whether or not the unrestricted meat is packaged.

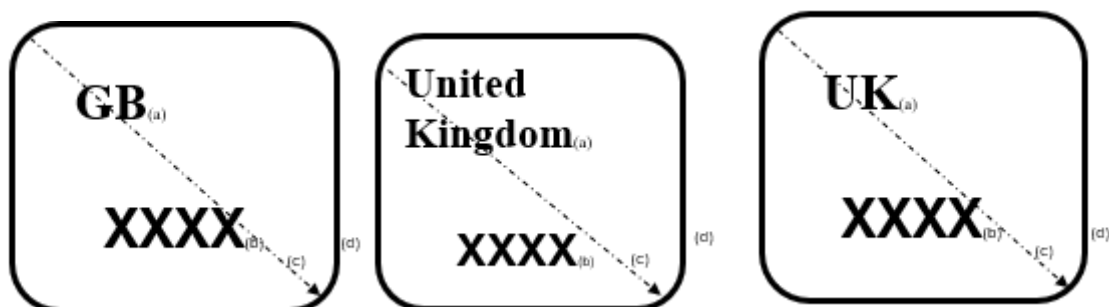
Restricted meat must be produced in accordance with:

- [Article 63 \(2\) of The Avian Influenza and Influenza of Avian Origin in Mammals \(England\) \(No.2\) Order 2006](#) in England
- [Article 63 \(2\) of The Avian Influenza and Influenza of Avian Origin in Mammals \(Wales\) \(No 2\) Order 2006](#) in Wales

Slaughterhouses which are designated by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) to receive and process birds from a PZ must notify its clients accordingly.

² Published at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/avian-influenza-bird-flu> alongside this document

The special mark shall be:



- (a) “UK”, “GB” or “United Kingdom” – letters 8mm high
- (b) XXXX – numbers 11mm high (where XXXX is the approval number of the premises, as referred to in point 7 of Part B or Section I of Annex II to Regulation (EC) No 853/2004)
- (c) Diameter (to outer edge of border) not less than 30mm
- (d) Thickness of border – 3mm

Where an identification mark is applied, such as to retail packaging, the size of the mark may vary according to the size of the packaging. However, it must be legible to the naked eye, indelible and the characters easily decipherable.

In the case of packaging containing cut meat or offal, the mark must be applied to a label fixed to the packaging, or printed on the packaging, in such a way that it is destroyed when the packaging is opened.

This is not necessary, however, if the process of opening destroys the packaging.

When wrapping provides the same protection as packaging, the label may be affixed to the wrapping.

The mark may be applied to the external surface of products of animal origin that are placed in transport containers or large packages. This includes containers or packages for further handling, processing, wrapping, or packaging in another establishment.

You are required to maintain the special mark on packaging or wrapping throughout the chain until it reaches the consumer.

General licence EXD 264(HPAI)(EW)³ allows for the special mark to be removed for the purposes of processing and/or repacking, subject to the conditions set out in the Schedule.

Retail butchers and catering establishments directly supplying the final consumer may remove the special mark and are not required to reapply it.

Any unrestricted meat that has come into contact with restricted meat must be handled as if it were controlled meat.

This includes meat which has come into contact at any stage of transport, storage, processing, or handling. In these circumstances the above conditions, including marking, must be applied.

Movement of restricted meat and products

General licence EXD 249(HPAI)(EW)⁴ is available to allow movements subject to the conditions of that licence being met. Movement of restricted meat out of Great Britain cannot be authorised.

Requirements for premises to process meat during an outbreak

Slaughterhouses are required to apply to the FSA for designation if they are located:

- in a PZ
- in a Surveillance Zone (SZ) or
- outside of the PZ and SZ and receive and process poultry originating from within the PZ or SZ

Apply for a designation by emailing: approvals@food.gov.uk.

These designations are defined as:

- Level 1 – slaughterhouses handling only unrestricted poultry originating from the SZ or slaughterhouses located within the PZ or SZ receiving poultry from outside the PZ which will produce unrestricted meat during an outbreak of avian influenza
- Level 2 – slaughterhouses receiving poultry originating from within the PZ which will produce restricted meat during an outbreak of avian influenza

The list of designated slaughterhouses can be found [here](#). This information may change as the outbreak develops.

³ Published at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/avian-influenza-bird-flu> alongside this document

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Disposal of waste and animal by-products

Level 2 designated slaughterhouses processing birds from the PZ are required to adhere to the special animal by-product (ABP) categorisation and disposal rules in accordance with [Articles 9, 10, 13 and 14 of Regulation \(EC\) No 1069/2009](#), as amended:

- no restricted meat or related by-product is allowed to go into raw pet food production
- **Restricted meat** is allowed to go into processed pet food production, but manufacturers must ensure any product falling into the restricted meat category is processed such that it is heat-treated to at least 70°C throughout
- When Restricted Meat or associated poultry carcass waste is collected, for disposal, the FBO will need a written confirmation from the rendering company that Category 3 ABP material will be subjected to a minimum heat treatment of 70°C
- if the FBO does not have this confirmation, Category 3 ABPs from birds originating from a PZ must be disposed as Category 2 ABP or above
- if Category 3 ABPs from birds originating in the PZ get mixed with Category 3 ABP from birds outside the PZ, the above controls apply to the entirety

All approved meat processing establishments handling restricted meat bearing the special mark are required to dispose of Category 3 ABP through a route that involves heat treatment to a minimum of 70°C.

On-farm slaughtering and exemptions from identification and health marking

An operator of an on-farm slaughter facility which has registered with their [Local Authority](#) for a Primary Production exemption from approval, under EU Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 must comply with this section of guidance. The section does not apply to slaughterhouses Approved by FSA, including those located on-farm.

You must not operate under this section unless the on-farm slaughter facility is registered with your local authority. An operator of a registered on-farm slaughter facility must apply to APHA for the facility to be designated if it is located in a PZ or SZ, or if the facility is slaughtering birds which originate in a PZ or SZ.

You must obtain a licence from APHA before you slaughter your poultry at your on-farm slaughter facility when your facility, or any of the birds on your farm are located within a Protection or Surveillance Zone.

This licence includes a requirement for pre-slaughter inspection and, in the Protection Zone, additional conditions for onward movement of the meat. Find out more about

applying for a specific licence on GOV.UK.

Registered on-farm slaughter facilities are only registered for the direct supply of small quantities of fresh meat from poultry and lagomorphs (hares and rabbits) slaughtered on the farm to:

- the final consumer local retail establishments directly supplying the final consumer as fresh meat

Registered slaughter facilities are not eligible to apply a health or identification mark to meat.

At these establishments, the Special Mark described in this document must not be applied as this would suggest a degree of meat inspection and control that does not apply at these premises.

The absence of a mark achieves the same outcome as the animal health Special Mark as the meat may only be sold within Great Britain and is not eligible for export to Third countries, including countries of the European Union.

Table of key dates

In the rules, the terms “restricted meat” and “unrestricted meat” are defined on the basis of when poultry are slaughtered, and by reference to the date estimated by a veterinary inspector as being the earliest date of infection at a premise in the relevant zone.

The following list, for each recent Infected Premises (IP), defines this date. This information may change as the epidemiology of an outbreak develops.

HPAI outbreaks from November 2024

| Infected premises | Protection Zone declared | Earliest infection date* | Meat produced from poultry originating in this area on or since this date is restricted* | Until the Protection Zone is lifted | Virus strain |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| Near Hornsea, East Riding of Yorkshire | 05 November 2024 | 28 October 2024 | To be confirmed | To be confirmed | H5N5 |

*These tables of dates will be updated as the outbreak develops. The earliest infection

date and the related “restricted” date may change as the investigations into the source of disease on each infected premises develops. We will update this table to reflect revised dates.

Restricted meat remains restricted despite the ending of the Protection Zone.

Legal references

From 1 January 2021, other than in Northern Ireland, any references to EU Regulations should be read as meaning retained EU law.

You can access retained EU law via [HM Government EU Exit Web Archive](#). This should be read alongside any EU Exit legislation that was made to ensure retained EU law operates correctly in a UK context.

The [EU Exit legislation](#) is available on legislation.gov.uk. In Northern Ireland, EU law will continue to apply in respect to most of the food and feed hygiene and safety law, as listed in the Northern Ireland Protocol, and retained EU law will not apply to Northern Ireland in these circumstances.