

**23 June 2022****An update on the seasonal threat and the  
response from the five local authorities within  
the region to the threat from avian flu.**

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**Purpose of the report**

To provide Committee with an update on the seasonal threat and the response from the five local authorities within the region to the threat from avian flu.

**Avian Flu**

1. Avian influenza (bird flu) mainly affects birds. It can also affect humans and other mammals. Avian influenza (bird flu) is a notifiable animal disease. This means that if anyone suspects any type of avian influenza in poultry or captive birds, they must report it immediately by calling the Defra Rural Services Helpline on 03000 200 301.
2. If anyone finds dead wild waterfowl (swans, geese, or ducks) or other dead wild birds, such as gulls or birds of prey, they should report them to the Defra helpline (03459 33 55 77). The important advice is **not to touch or pick up any dead or visibly sick birds that may be found.**
3. All bird keepers (whether they have pet birds, commercial flocks or just a few birds in a backyard flock) must keep a close watch on them for signs of disease and maintain good biosecurity at all times. If anyone has any concerns about the health of their birds, they should seek prompt advice from their vet.
4. Individuals keeping birds should register their poultry, even if only kept as pets, so that they can be contacted during an outbreak. This is a legal requirement if anyone has 50 or more birds. Poultry includes chickens, ducks, turkeys, geese, pigeon (bred for meat), partridge, quail, guinea fowl and pheasants.

**Avian Influenza Prevention Zone**

5. An Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ) has been in force across Great Britain since 3 November 2021, and in Northern Ireland since 17 November 2021. Mandatory housing measures for poultry and captive birds were introduced on the 29 November 2021 and ended at 00:01 on Monday 2 May 2022. However, the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ) remains in force across the UK until further notice, with only the housing measures component being lifted.
6. This means while birds are allowed to range outside it remains 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 follow strict biosecurity measures to limit the spread of and eradicate the disease.

7. The lifting of the housing measures does not apply to areas in a Protection zone, where poultry and other captive birds must continue to be housed.

### **AIPZ in England**

8. The AIPZ in England means that bird keepers must:
  - cleanse and disinfect clothing, footwear, equipment, and vehicles before and after contact with poultry and captive birds – if practical, use disposable protective clothing
  - reduce the movement of people, vehicles, or equipment to and from areas where poultry and captive birds are kept, to minimise contamination from manure, slurry, and other products, and use effective vermin control
  - thoroughly cleanse and disinfect housing on a continuous basis
  - keep fresh disinfectant at the right concentration at all farm and poultry housing entry and exit points
  - minimise direct and indirect contact between poultry and captive birds and wild birds, including making sure all feed and water is not accessible to wild birds

### **Enforcement**

9. Avian influenza controls, including the AIPZ are enforced by the Local Authority Animal Health Function (LAAHF), which is situated with the Trading Standards or Environmental Health Service of a local authority.

### **Risk level**

10. The risk of incursion of highly pathogenic (HPAI) avian influenza H5 in wild birds in Great Britain has reduced from very high to high. With the risk of poultry exposure to HPAI H5 in Great Britain has reduced from medium (with low uncertainty) to low (with high uncertainty) where good biosecurity is applied and has reduced from high (with low uncertainty) to medium (with high uncertainty) where biosecurity is suboptimal.
11. 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. 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. Properly cooked poultry and poultry products, including eggs, are safe to eat.

### **Cases in England**

12. As of the 19 May 2022, there were 98 cases of avian influenza H5N1 in England. There were also 2 cases of avian influenza in Wales where a small area of the disease control zones extended into England. In addition, there were 2 cases of avian influenza in Scotland where a small area of the surveillance zone surrounding each case extended into England.

## **Wild bird surveillance in Great Britain**

13. 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. There have been multiple findings of HPAI H5N1 in wild birds from sites across GB.

### **Advice for the public**

#### **Support for the farming community**

14. Officers continue to work in partnership with a range of organisations and interested parties to support to help the bird keeping community through the challenging times associated with the latest outbreak.

### **The Response from Local Authorities**

15. During the outbreaks, officers have continued to work closely with a range of partners including poultry keepers, small-holdings, urban farms, and allotment societies to ensure that the biosecurity measures around avian flu are being closely adhered to. Officers have also had to deal with the full ramifications of three confirmed outbreaks.

### **City of Sunderland**

16. Avian influenza H5N1 was confirmed in birds at a premises near Washington, Sunderland, Tyne & Wear on the 11 December 2021. Following a risk assessment, a 3km Captive Bird (Monitoring) Controlled Zone was put in place surrounding the premises.

17. Following successful completion of disease control activities and surveillance within the disease control zone surrounding this premises, the 3km Captive Bird (Monitoring) Controlled Zone has been revoked.

### **City of Newcastle upon Tyne**

18. Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1 was confirmed in birds at premises near Byker, Newcastle Upon Tyne, Tyne & Wear on the 25 January 2022. A 3km Protection Zone and 10km Surveillance Zone was put in place around the premises. All poultry on the suspect premises have been humanely culled.

19. Following successful completion of disease control activities and surveillance within the disease control zones surrounding this premises, the 3km Protection Zone has ended and the 10km Surveillance Zone has been revoked.

### **Gateshead**

20. Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1 was confirmed in a small poultry flock at a premises near Blaydon, Gateshead, Tyne, and Wear on the 23 February 2022. A 3km Protection Zone and 10km Surveillance Zone was put in place around the premises. Birds on the infected premises have been humanely culled.

21. Following successful completion of disease control activities and surveillance within the disease control zones surrounding this premises, the 3km Protection Zone has ended and the 10km Surveillance Zone has been revoked.

### **Recommendation**

21. The Committee is asked to note the information. Further information can be sought at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/avian-influenza-bird-flu>

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