

Avian influenza (bird flu) national prevention zone declared



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An Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ) has been declared across the whole of England to mitigate the risk of the disease spreading, the UK's Chief Veterinary Officer Christine Middlemiss has confirmed today (11 November).

This means it is a legal requirement for all bird keepers to follow strict biosecurity measures.

Keepers with more than 500 birds will need to restrict access for non-essential people on their sites, workers will need to change clothing and footwear before entering bird enclosures and site vehicles will need to be cleaned and disinfected regularly.

Backyard owners with smaller numbers of poultry including chickens, ducks and geese are also urged to strengthen their biosecurity measures in order to prevent further outbreaks of avian influenza in the UK.

Public Health England (PHE) advises that the risk to public health from the virus is very low and the Food Standards Agency advises that avian influenzas pose a very low food safety risk for UK consumers. Properly cooked poultry and poultry products, including eggs, are safe to eat.

The UK Government has worked closely with Scottish and Welsh Governments to introduce national prevention zones at the same time, meaning that the restrictions will be applied across the whole of Great Britain.

The introduction of the AIPZ comes after two separate, unrelated cases in kept poultry and birds confirmed in England last week and a third case of H5N8 avian flu in captive birds

was confirmed today at a broiler breeder farm in Herefordshire. A very small number of wild birds in South West of England have also been found to have had the disease.

The introduction of a prevention zone follows a decision to raise the risk level for avian influenza incursion in wild Birds in Great Britain from 'medium' to 'high' last week.

UK Chief Veterinary Officer Christine Middlemiss said:

I have today declared a national Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ) legislating for actions all bird keepers must take to help prevent the disease spreading to more poultry and other domestic birds.

Public Health England has confirmed that the risk to public health is very low and the Food Standards Agency advises that bird flu poses a very low food safety risk for UK consumers.

Whether you keep just a few birds or thousands, you are now legally required to meet enhanced biosecurity requirements and this is in your interests to do, to protect your birds from this highly infectious disease.

The prevention zone means bird keepers across the country must:

Ensure the areas where birds are kept are unattractive to wild birds, for example by netting ponds, and by removing wild bird food sources;

Feed and water your birds in enclosed areas to discourage wild birds;

Minimise movement in and out of bird enclosures;

Clean and disinfect footwear and keep areas where birds live clean and tidy;

Reduce any existing contamination by cleansing and disinfecting concrete areas, and fencing off wet or boggy areas.

The prevention zone will be in place until further notice and will be kept under regular review as part of our work to monitor the threat of bird flu.

Poultry keepers and members of the public should report dead wild birds to the Defra helpline on 03459 33 55 77 and keepers should report suspicion of disease to APHA on 03000 200 301. Keepers should familiarise themselves with our avian flu advice.

Further information

The government's outbreak assessment following recent cases in England can be accessed [here](#).

Wild geese near Stroud in Gloucestershire and swans near Dawlish in Devon have tested positive for highly pathogenic avian influenza H5N8. In addition, a wild goose near Weymouth in Dorset has tested positive for H5N8 (pathogenicity yet to be determined).

Avian influenza of the H5N2 strain was first confirmed on Monday 2 November in a small commercial poultry premises in Kent where a 1km Low Pathogenic Avian Influenza LPAI Restricted zone has been put in place. All birds at the small mixed species commercial premises have been humanely culled to limit the spread of the disease.

A separate and unrelated case of avian influenza of the H5N8 strain was later confirmed at a site in Cheshire and 3km Protection Zone and 10km Surveillance zone were put in place and all 13,500 birds at the farm have been humanely culled. Testing has confirmed this is a highly pathogenic strain related to the virus currently circulating in Europe.

A third confirmed case of H5N8 avian flu in captive birds has today been confirmed at a broiler breeder farm in Herefordshire (pathogenicity yet to be determined). 3km and 10km temporary control zones have now been put in place and all of the birds on site will be humanely culled to reduce the risk of the disease spreading.

For more advice and regular updates on the latest situation,

visit Governments' avian flu pages: in England, Scotland, Wales and NI

Avian Influenza is in no way connected to the COVID-19 pandemic which is caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus which is not carried in poultry.

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