

Internal Guidance	
Avian Influenza – Estate / Outreach / C&E guidance (vrs iii)	
Implementation Date:	03 11 21
Review Date:	28 02 22
Authors:	Estate Support Team

***Avian Influenza – 2021 / 22 outbreak
Summary – Key Facts***

LATEST SITUATION REPORT

Updated 1 November 2021*:

The Chief Veterinary Officer has confirmed a case of H5N1 Avian Influenza (pathogenicity to be confirmed) at a premises near Wrexham, Wales. Temporary Control Zones have been put in place around the infected premises.

Following a risk assessment, the 3km Protection Zone and 10km Surveillance Zone have been amended and 3km and 10km Captive Bird (Monitoring) Controlled Zones have been declared around a bird rescue centre near Droitwich Spa, Wychavon, Worcestershire, England.

At the time of writing there is a confirmed a case of H5N1 Avian Influenza at a premises near Wrexham, Wales and a bird rescue centre near Droitwich Spa, Wychavon, Worcestershire, England.

The AI Wild Bird Surveillance programme has also identified the presence of avian influenza in the following areas of Scotland where follow up assessments are in progress:

Kirkcaldy, Fife (unspecified gull)
Leith, Edinburgh (mute swan)

You can check where outbreaks have occurred and what risk and control zones are in place via the following links to interactive country maps.

*Note the country specific web-sites and the associated interactive maps – see Table 1 for details – will always provide the most accurate picture of any outbreaks.

Background

- Avian Influenza (AI) or bird flu is a highly contagious family of viruses that impacts particularly on captive birds, such as turkeys and hens but is also carried and spread by wild birds, particularly wildfowl and gulls. Infected birds shed avian influenza virus in their saliva, mucous and faeces. Where AI is identified in a captive bird flock it is presently standard procedure for that flock to be culled.
- Table 1 below provides links through to further background information on AI. These links especially the interactive maps also provide the latest picture of the outbreak.

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- Although AI viruses usually do not infect people, rare cases of human infection with these viruses have been reported and therefore AI is a notifiable disease for both animals and humans.
- Such human infections are usually the result of close proximity of humans to large numbers of infected birds such as on farms and so associated with captive birds. There are no reports of humans catching AI from contact with wild birds and the Food Standards Agency also 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. **Therefore, the risk to public health from the virus is very low.**
- Where an actual outbreak is confirmed within a poultry/captive bird unit then a more stringent Control Zone system is put in place. These are usually made up of a central 1km Restriction Zone and Controlled Zones of 3 and 10km. Within these areas culling of poultry may take place and there are enhanced movement and biosecurity precautions as well as inspections of poultry/captive bird units and enhanced surveillance of wild birds.
- Wild birds, particularly waterfowl, gulls, and raptors such as buzzards are known to carry and be affected by AI, as are many gamebirds. Migratory wild birds are deemed a primary source of movement of the AI around and across countries. Because of this an AI Wild Bird Surveillance programme is now in place across the UK and this includes the testing of dead or sick wild birds for AI.
- At the present time while the specific advice on what dead birds to report varies slightly across the countries the following summary should be used:
 - one or more dead gulls, waders, ducks, geese and swans (webbed feet, long legs or long neck) or birds of prey.
 - Any other single dead birds, such as song birds, do not need to be reported.
 - However, if more than five dead birds, of any species/type, are found in one locality that should also be reported.
- While additional control zones are declared around infected farms these rarely involve the closure of surrounding countryside and therefore it is extremely unlikely that we will be required to close any Woodland Trust sites.
- Are there any implication for the Woodland Trust?
 - Should the disease continue to spread and as greater awareness of the diseases increases there is a likelihood of visitors / volunteers / contractors finding and reporting dead birds on our sites or asking how they should deal with dead birds they find elsewhere.
 - There is also clearly a need for any outreach / estate staff to bear in mind the presence of AI and the need for enhanced biosecurity measures around poultry and wildfowl farms/units and shoots.

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1. Dealing with reports

1.1 If you take a call from a visitor/volunteer or contractor reporting the presence of sick or dead birds on a WT site then the following should be undertaken:

- Take as much details as you can to help identify the location.
- Stress that they shouldn't touch or move the bird.
- Request they report the finding themselves to the relevant country contact point – see table 1 below. *We ask this because they have the first-hand knowledge of the bird/location and are best equipped to deal with any question from the government agency.*
- You should also provide them a suitable WT central contact number which they can pass on should they be asked to provide landowner details. Such as the relevant WT Country main office numbers.
- Ask that they if possible they call us back to confirm they have reported it successfully and what if any action was indicated would take place.
- If the caller won't or doesn't want to make the report, then we should do so if we have sufficient information to provide a location, this may require us to supply a map.
- Ensure that the relevant Site Manager, Estate Manager and local Comms & Engagement manager are aware.

1.2 If you take a call from a visitor/volunteer reporting the presence of sick or dead birds on a non-WT site, or their garden, then the following should be undertaken:

- No need to take any details or do not offer to report the finding.
- If the bird fits the criteria for reporting provide them with the contact numbers.
- If the bird doesn't fit the reporting criteria, such as small single bird then let them know this is very low risk and doesn't require reporting. It may be worth stressing that many thousands of birds die every week of natural causes, particularly in winter, and so it is not unusual to occasionally find dead birds. If they have come across the dead bird in the the countryside or public spaces, they shouldn't look to touch or move the bird but report to the

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landowner if they know who they are. If it is in a garden direct them to the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) website which provides advice on reporting and disposing of dead garden birds.

<https://www.bto.org/how-you-can-help/take-part-project/health-safety/avian-flu>

1.3 In terms of reassurance, if they are worried about the presence of the dead bird(s), the present government advice is:

- There are no proven cases of humans catching the disease from wild birds. **Therefore, the risk to public health from the virus is very low.**
- The virus is spread through faeces and nasal secretions and as such people should avoid touching sick birds or touching/moving any carcasses.
- If they have touched the bird, then they should undertake the basic precaution of washing hands with soap and/or disinfectant hand wash directly afterwards and avoid touching food or their mouth until they have done so.
- There is no evidence that any type of AI has passed from avian species to dogs. So if a visitor dog has found or touched the dead bird there is no evidence the dog will be at risk but if they are concerned they should contact their vet.
- You should let them know that the carcass of a reported bird may remain on site for several days and they should not expect the bird to be removed quickly. ***The decision when to remove a reported dead bird rests with the relevant government vet service and not with us at the present time.***

1.4 At the time of writing the indications are that the government staff will follow up on any reported incidents. However, we have also produced a guide for contractors on how to deal with carcasses should they remain on site.

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Table 1 – Country specific information sources and contact details re AI

Country	Background Information Source	Reporting dead Wild birds – contact points
Northern Ireland AI – mapping information for NI Avian Influenza Map Viewer (daera-ni.gov.uk)	NI	0300 200 7840
Wales AI – Mapping information for Wales APHA Interactive Disease Map (arcgis.com)	Avian influenza (bird flu): latest update GOV.WALES	03459 33 55 77
Scotland AI – Mapping information for Wales APHA Interactive Disease Map (arcgis.com)	Scotland	03459 33 55 77
England APHA Interactive Disease Map (arcgis.com)	England	03459 33 55 77
Weekly Update on AI findings in Wild Birds Avian influenza in wild birds - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)		

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2. The Woodland Trust Estate

- 2.1 **Management Access:** Site Managers should consider the potential impacts for any planned operations that will take place adjacent to or which involves access routes close to poultry units both indoor and free range. In such cases it is suggested that the Site Manager contacts the farmer to discuss any additional measure that could be put in place to protect the biosecurity of their enterprise – such as the cleaning of contractor vehicles or use of alternative access. Note within a control area related to an actual on farm outbreak for AI then access maybe restricted as part of the control order.
- 2.2 **Visitors / WT site closures:** There is no evidence that humans can spread or contract AI, outside of those in direct contact with large numbers of infected birds. Therefore, there should be no need or requirement to close WT sites even those adjacent to poultry units. The only exception to this would be if requested to do so by a government agency as part of a control area related to a local on farm outbreak for AI.
- 2.3 **Neighbouring landowner concerns:** If we get contacted by neighbouring farmers/landowners requesting closing or restricting our access routes or visitors to our sites then firstly establish if the site is part of local control zone due to a local or on-farm outbreak (see section 4 regarding interactive map) and then before making any commitments discuss with the relevant EM, Head of Estate and H&S Manager. You should however follow any instructions *issued by a government agency* as a result of a local control area being in place and then report through to your EM and the Head of Estate.
- 2.4 **Disposal of dead birds not collected for testing:** Where dead birds have been reported on the estate and have not been collected for testing by government vets then if felt necessary there is a disposal / movement specification for use with contractors who are happy to undertake the work. In most cases unless the dead bird is generating local concern or repeat reports it is best left in situ.
- 2.5 **Bird ringing:** if you have any bird ringing presently taking place on the estate then ensure your contact is aware of the present situation and if they are not already draw their attention to the interactive risk maps (see Table 1) which provides details on where on-farm infections have resulted in a control zone being put in place. When infections are identified in captive birds, usually a protection/control zone of 3km and a surveillance zone of 10km are put in place around the infected premises. **Ringling is suspended within surveillance zones.** However, for all other areas bird ringing can still be practiced. If they have any direct queries around bird ringing and AI they should contact BTO.

For the latest information on control zone areas please use the links provided in Table 1 to the country maps.

- 2.6 **Moving / Burial of dead birds:** In some cases, it is possible that the dead bird(s) will need to be moved prior to collection or as a result of them not being collected

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for testing the carcass may need to be moved / buried. Both of these should be an exception – but experience in previous outbreaks as AI became more established the collection and testing of birds became less frequent and burial was used. The rationale for any movement or burial is where:

- The carcass is in a highly visible / accessible location to visitors and therefore poses a potential risk of direct contact or repeat reports.
- or
- The carcass is in a location where pollution of private water supply is possible.
- or
- We are instructed to do so by a statutory agency

2.7 Moving and Burial specification: Movement and/or burial of birds should only be undertaken by contractors and is not a task suitable for volunteers / staff. A specification to allow contractor to undertake this safely is available.

2.8 Information required by Contractors: if you require a carcass to be buried please ensure you use the relevant specification and ensure you supply the background information required to achieve this safely and so you use help the contractor identify a location suitable to meet the following:

- The burial site should be at least 10 m away from the nearest footpath or area regularly used by the public and any obvious animal tracks/paths
- The burial site should be at least 25m for any source of water – pond or stream/ditch and from any underground services.
- Where private water supplies are taken from the site then a suitable buffer zone*around such water collection / supply points must be agreed with the Site Supervising Officer in which no burial should take place.

*You may well already have agreed site buffer zones for such supply sources but it is advised that such buffer zones should be at least 100m. If in doubt please discuss with the H&S Manager.

3. Outreach staff

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3.1 Poultry: All sizes of poultry operations and both indoor and free range set ups are potentially at risk from AI. All farmers/landowners with poultry regardless of numbers should be adhering to the requirements outlined in the AIPZ guidance which are largely based around enhanced biosecurity measures.

3.1.1 Planning a site visit: Outreach staff should therefore check before **any farm based** visit as to whether there are poultry present and what additional biosecurity measures the owner would like observed. In most cases this is clearly going to be simply the avoidance of areas used for poultry, including free range areas, or the parking of vehicles in areas associated with such enterprises. Advice involving woodland creation on free range poultry areas or close proximity to indoor units is best delayed until after removal of the AIPZ. If you feel such advisory visits need to take place and the farmer is happy for this to do so then discuss with your Outreach Manager.

3.1.2 While on site: It is advised that while on any agreed visit you should remain vigilant to this issue and ensure you avoid areas used by poultry.

3.2 Shoots: Shooting whether of gamebirds or other quarry species, is currently unaffected by the AIPZ controls in place. However, many gamebirds and wild bird quarry can be affected by and carry AI.

3.2.1 Planning a site visit: Outreach staff before any visit to land/woodland where shooting of gamebirds takes place should check with the landowner as to whether any additional biosecurity measures are in place and that they remain supportive of your visit.

3.2.2 While on site: It is advised that while on any agreed visit staff should remain vigilant to this issue and ensure you avoid areas where gamebirds may gather such as pens or feeding stations.

3.2.3 For more details on how shoots are being advised then visit the BASC web-site:

<https://basc.org.uk/avian-influenza/>

3.3 Local Control Areas: It is highly likely that any planned visits within a Local Control Area established due to an actual outbreak will be postponed by the land owner. Our advice would be, regardless of the landowner views, that you should look to avoid/delay any such visits as clearly regardless of biosecurity measure such a visit poses a risk of onward spread. Hence the need to maintain good contact with the landowner with regard to planned site visits.

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3.4 General biosecurity: It is advised that all outreach staff continue to exercise suitable biosecurity measures at this time.

- Clean & disinfect boots between site visits
- Ensure trousers/water proofs are free from bird faeces
- Clean hands and use disinfectant hand wash between sites visits and before eating
- The parking of vehicles should be away from any high risk areas and agreed in advance with the landowners – so away from poultry sheds or areas where machinery used within poultry areas is parked or stored.

4. “Higher Risk Areas” and Control Zone mapping

4.1 All areas in Great Britain remain at risk of bird flu however there are a number of defined ‘Higher Risk Areas’ (HRAs). These are generally areas near where wild birds (and in particular gulls and wild waterfowl) gather, such as lakes, marshes or estuaries.

You can check where the HRA are via the the links provided in Table 1 to the country maps.

4.2 These maps also shows control zones around known infected farms.

5. Advice / Support

5.1 Please talk to your line manager if you have any concerns regarding AI or how to deal with reports or impacts on your work.

5.2 The Estate Support Team and H&S Manager can also be contacted for any additional advice or concerns you may have.