



An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture,
Food and the Marine

Avian Influenza Update

1st April 2021

National Disease Control Centre

Number 03 of 2021

Precautionary Confinement of Birds (Housing Order) to be lifted on 9th April

- Regulations introduced in December which require the confinement of poultry and captive birds are to be lifted from 9th April. All flock owners intending to allow birds to have outdoor access from this date must take action now to ensure those areas conform to best biosecurity practice. This will help minimise the potential for poultry and captive birds to come into contact with wild birds and potential environmental contamination with avian influenza viruses.
- Additional biosecurity regulations introduced in December to help protect poultry and captive birds from avian influenza remain in force (*SI No.566 of 2020*). High standards of biosecurity remain essential as infection can survive for weeks and may still be present in the environment. A related [guidance document](#) is available to view on the Avian Influenza page of the Gov.ie website
- A ban on bird gatherings, marts and assemblies for the purposes of show or sale also remains in place (*SI No.567 of 2020*)

NB. The highest levels of biosecurity are imperative during this period for Avian Influenza in all flocks irrespective of size

Risk to Ireland regarding HPAI H5N8

- Avian Influenza is **highly contagious for birds**. The virus may be present in the environment and can be transmitted to your flock by wild birds. It is **vital that outdoor areas are prepared** ahead of the 9th of April to mitigate the risk.
- Flock owners should continue to **maintain strict biosecurity** to prevent the introduction of AI into poultry and captive bird flocks. The risk has reduced sufficiently to allow the housing requirement to be lifted; however, **there is still a risk of incursion**.
- The reduction in the risk level is based on a number of parameters which include decreasing wild bird infection pressure, reducing numbers of migratory waterfowl and increasing environmental temperatures and daylight hours.
- Flock owners should **remain vigilant for any signs of disease** in their flocks, and report any disease suspicion to their nearest [Regional Veterinary Office](#)
- **Members of the public are advised not to handle sick or dead wild birds. Please report sick or dead wild birds to the local Regional Veterinary Office or contact the DAFM disease hotline on 1850 200456**
- **Sick or dead wild birds can also be reported to DAFM using the Avian Check - Wild Bird App** <https://aviancheck.apps.rhos.agriculture.gov.ie/>

Avian Influenza – Current Situation in Poultry

Ireland

- There have been no further outbreaks of avian influenza H5N8 confirmed in poultry or captive birds in the Republic of Ireland since a single outbreak which occurred on 10th December 2020. The restriction zones put in place following that outbreak were lifted on 14th January 2021

Northern Ireland

- No further outbreaks of avian influenza H5N8 have been confirmed in poultry or captive birds in Northern Ireland since the two separate cases confirmed in County Antrim on January 7th and January 11th. All restriction zones placed following those outbreaks have since been lifted

Avian influenza in wild birds in Ireland

- The most recent case of HPAI H5N8 in a wild bird in Ireland was confirmed on February 16th 2021
- A total of 28 wild birds have been confirmed with Avian Influenza subtype H5N8 since it was first detected on 6th November 2020 to date. 2 further birds were confirmed with HPAI H5N3 on January 19th 2021. This has been the only confirmed incidence of that particular avian influenza subtype in Ireland this year
- Wild bird species confirmed with HPAI H5N8 since November 2020 in Ireland include the following: whooper swan (17), mute swan (5), barnacle goose (1), curlew (1), cormorant (1) and peregrine falcon (3)
- Wild bird HPAI cases have been confirmed in counties: Cavan, Cork, Donegal, Galway, Kildare, Limerick, Louth, Mayo, Monaghan, Wexford and Wicklow



*Figure 1(above):
Map of confirmed HPAI H5N8 cases
in wild birds in Ireland since 10th
November 2020*



*Figure 2 (above):
Map of confirmed HPAI H5N3 cases in
wild birds in Ireland in 2021*

Avian Influenza elsewhere in Europe

- On March 29th 2021, the UK authorities confirmed an outbreak of HPAI H5N8 on an organic chicken broiler farm near Uttoxeter in East Staffordshire
- On March 28th 2021, avian influenza subtype **H5N3** was confirmed on a commercial turkey breeders premises near Winsford, Cheshire West and Chester. Further testing has confirmed this to be a low pathogenicity strain
- Since the beginning of 2021, HPAI H5N8 has been confirmed in poultry flocks widely across European countries. Within the last 2 weeks alone, outbreaks have been confirmed in a number of poultry flocks in Sweden, Poland, Czech Republic, Germany, France, Denmark and the United Kingdom

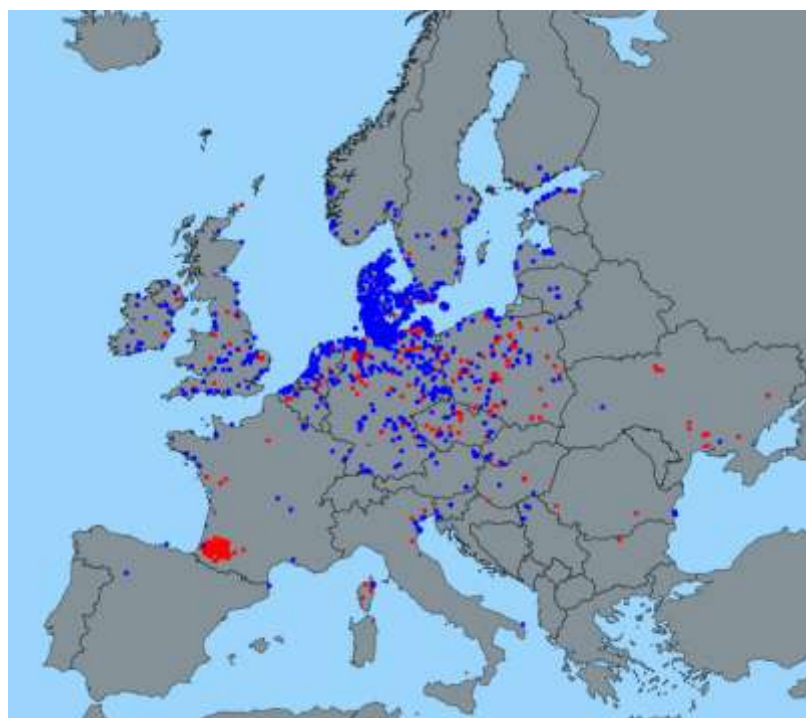


Figure 3 (above) Cases of HPAI in wild birds in blue and outbreaks of HPAI in poultry in red from November 1st 2020 to March 31st 2021
(Courtesy of European Commission Animal Disease Notification System)

What can poultry owners do to reduce the risk of avian influenza?

- 1. Be vigilant-** Monitor your birds carefully for any clinical signs of disease. If in doubt contact your veterinary practitioner for advice. Signs of avian influenza include:

- Death/high mortalities in a flock
- Depression/lethargy
- Loss of appetite
- Respiratory distress such as gaping beak, coughing, sneezing, gurgling, rattling
- Swelling and blue discolouration of combs, wattles, neck and throat
- Diarrhoea
- Reduced egg production or no egg production

2. Increase Biosecurity

[Biosecurity guidance to help prevent avian influenza](#) including clinical signs and leaflets can be found on the Gov.ie website.

Personnel and Visitors

- Wear disposable or dedicated outer clothing when in contact with your birds
- Wear boots that can be disinfected, disposable gloves and wash hands after contact with poultry
- Only allow essential personnel access to your birds.

Buildings and Equipment

- Regularly clean and disinfect hard surfaces such as paths and walkways
- Provide clean boot washing and disinfection facilities at all entrances/exits and ensure that people use them
- Clean and disinfect any vehicles or equipment that comes into contact with the birds after use
- Have suitable pest control in place

**Although advice regarding Avian Influenza protection measures has not changed, the importance of biosecurity in poultry flocks at this time cannot be overstated.
This applies to ALL flocks, irrespective of size.**

Wild Birds

- Feed and water birds inside, or at least under cover, to minimise the risk of attracting wild birds
- Clean up any waste feed in outdoor areas frequently
- Use of netting or wild bird decoys or deterrents to keep wild birds away from poultry areas.

Management

- Keep ducks and geese separate to other poultry species
- The Department also reminds all poultry owners, including those who keep only 1 or 2 birds, of their legal obligation to register their premises with the Department. Guidance on how to register your poultry can be found at:
<https://www.gov.ie/en/service/984df6-poultry-register/>
- Use an [approved disinfectant](#) against Avian influenza in accordance with the manufacturers instructions
- Implement the measures detailed in the avian influenza regulations detailed above

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