



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



Information on Avian Influenza Control Measures in Ireland

Summer/Autumn 2021

Introduction

This document is intended to give an outline of control measures that are applied in the event of a suspicion or confirmation of avian influenza in poultry or in wild birds.

The control measures for avian influenza are laid down in European Community legislation in the Animal Health Law Regulation (EU) 2016/429 and its associated delegated acts (in particular Commission Delegated Regulations 2020/687, 2020/689 and also Commission Decisions 2018/1136, 2006/563) and in national legislation including for example, the Animal Health and Welfare Act 2013 ([Statutory Instrument No. 15 of 2013](#)). Both European Union (EU) legislation and national legislation are enforced in addition to strategies for effective risk management, risk communication to stakeholders, and enhanced on-farm biosecurity to safeguard the Irish poultry industry from the risk posed by notifiable avian influenza. DAFM carries out surveillance for avian influenza on both poultry and wild birds and also has a national contingency plan in place to respond rapidly and effectively to any potential outbreak.

Risk Mitigation Measures during a high risk period – Autumn/Winter 2020

Measures to prevent an outbreak of avian influenza may evolve during an increased risk period. For example, as the number of wild bird positive High Pathogenicity H5N8 (HPAI H5N8) cases began to increase in late November 2020, national legislation was introduced which required the implementation of mandatory biosecurity measures on poultry holdings ([S.I. No. 566 of 2020 - Avian Influenza \(Biosecurity measures\) Regulations](#)). Examples of some of these additional biosecurity measures include disinfection points at entry and exits to holdings, measures to prevent contact between poultry and wild birds e.g. bird netting, feeding indoors, secure feed storage and accommodation etc. In addition, all bird gatherings including for example, shows and sales were prohibited ([S.I. No. 567 of 2020 - Avian Influenza \(Restriction on Assembly of Live Birds\) Regulations](#)).

On 21st December 2020, further legislation was introduced to mitigate the risk of the disease which obliged all poultry owners to confine or house their birds to prevent any interaction with wild birds ([S.I. No. 663 of 2020 - Avian Influenza \(Precautionary Confinement of Birds\) Regulations](#)). A [Frequently Asked Questions Document](#) and a [Biosecurity Guidance Document](#) were produced in light of the increased risk of HPAI H5N8 for poultry and captive bird keepers.

Following risk assessments these additional stringent biosecurity measures which had been introduced during this avian influenza high risk period, have been now revoked. The housing requirement (S.I. No. 663 of 2020) was removed on April 7th, with the additional Biosecurity Regulations (S.I. No. 566 of 2020 and S.I. No. 567 of 2020) revoked on June 3rd 2021.

Risk Awareness

DAFM implements a comprehensive biosecurity awareness programme for avian influenza which involves the publication of regular disease updates to a wide range of stakeholders which can be accessed on the dedicated [Avian influenza \(Bird Flu\)- Current Situation](#) page of the Gov.ie website. In addition, social media platforms such as Twitter and FaceBook and online media platforms such as Agriland are used to disseminate the message regarding the requirement for increased biosecurity and confine poultry and captive birds during high risk periods. DAFM also advertises on an online poultry platform DoneDeal to promote flock registration and biosecurity for backyard flock owners and operates a text alert service where it can communicate quickly with registered flock owners during a high risk period.

Poultry Registration

Anyone who keeps poultry in Ireland, including those with just one or two birds, must register their premises with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine in accordance with national legislation (*Statutory Instrument No. 114 of 2014*). This includes all birds that are reared or kept for the production of eggs, meat or other products and including breeding poultry. It also includes birds that are kept in order to restock game bird supplies. Registered holdings are entered on a database. The requirement for the registration of poultry holdings allows DAFM to communicate alerts, updates and biosecurity material to poultry owners on how to prevent an avian influenza outbreak. Registration is free and there are different options available to flock owners who wish to register their flocks including an [online registration platform](#).

Notification of Suspect Cases of Avian Influenza

Wild Birds

DAFM operates an early warning detection system through a dedicated Avian Influenza Hotline telephone **076 106 4403** (office hours) or **1850 200 456** (outside of normal office hours) which allows for members of the public, wildlife rangers from the National Parks and Wildlife Service and hunters to notify us of any sick or dead wild birds. The birds are collected by trained DAFM and NPWS personnel and submitted to the Regional Veterinary Laboratories (RVL) for sampling. Samples are then submitted to the Central Veterinary Research Laboratory (CVRL) where Avian Influenza testing is carried out. In addition, DAFM operates an [Avian Check App](#) which allows anyone to report a sick or dead wild bird for investigation using their PC, laptop, tablet or smartphone.

A list of species of wild birds to be targeted for surveillance for avian influenza is provided by *Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/689*. The list of 'wild bird targeted species' compiled and updated in light of the most recent knowledge is available on the website of

the EURL. Ireland has amended this list with the assistance of expert ornithologists to reflect the demographics of birds present in the country, with the list updated regularly. See list here:



ListOfWildBirdSpecies
ForTargetedAISurveil

Poultry

Avian influenza is a notifiable disease which legally obliges anyone who suspects the presence of the disease to notify DAFM ([Statutory Instrument No. 130 of 2016 \(Notification and Control of Diseases affecting Terrestrial Animals \(No. 2\) Regulations\)](#)).

Flock owners are encouraged by DAFM to familiarise themselves with the clinical signs of Avian Influenza and report all suspected cases of the disease to their local Regional Veterinary Office of DAFM during office hours. Outside of normal office hours DAFM operates a 24/7 on-call rota involving veterinary staff for the notification and investigation of all suspect former OIE List A diseases including avian influenza which can be notified through the National Disease Emergency Hotline Number **1850 200 456**.

All suspect cases of avian influenza are also notified to the National Disease Control Centre of DAFM who co-ordinate all aspects of the follow up investigation including of the suspect holding.

Suspect Avian Influenza in Poultry and Captive Birds Measures

The following measures are taken when a suspect case of avian influenza is reported including:

- A verbal restriction is issued by a Veterinary Inspector from the Regional Veterinary Office of DAFM pending an inspection of the flock which includes a ban on the movement of any birds, people, carcasses, eggs, litter/manure, vehicles or equipment off the premises
- On arrival, the Veterinary Inspector will carry out an examination of the birds, conduct a census of all birds on the site
- Samples will be taken in accordance with Commission Delegated Regulations 2020/687 and 2020/689 and sent to the National Reference Laboratory for Avian Influenza (Central Veterinary Research Laboratory, Backweston, Co. Kildare)
- The Veterinary Inspector will serve a formal written restriction notice placing controls on the movement of birds, people, carcasses, eggs, litter/manure, vehicles, equipment or anything liable to transmit disease to and from the premises

- Birds will be housed. In cases where housing is not possible then birds will be confined in a manner to prevent contact with all other birds including wild birds
- Disinfection facilities must be installed at the entrances and exits of the premises and the bird houses using a disinfectant which is from the [approved list of disinfectants](#) for avian influenza.

In the event that the symptoms indicate a strong suspicion of HPAI, additional measures may be taken including:

- The birds may be slaughtered in advance of confirmation if there is a risk of spread of disease
- Temporary movement controls on poultry and poultry products may be put in place in the area around the premises

If the samples are negative for avian influenza:

The restrictions on movements to and from the premises will be removed.

If the samples are positive for avian influenza:

Control measures will be introduced in accordance with EU legislation (Animal Health Law 2016/429) and Chapter 10.4 High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza of the OIE Terrestrial Code.

The European Commission will be notified within 24 hours of confirmation of HPAI through the Animal Disease Information System (ADIS). The OIE will be notified of all HPAI outbreaks within 24 hours of confirmation through OIE WAHIS. In accordance with the OIE Terrestrial Code any outbreaks of LPAI in domestic and captive wild birds where there is proven natural transmission to humans associated with severe consequences will be notified to the OIE and European Commission.

Confirmed Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in Poultry

Measures on the infected premises:

All infected poultry and captive birds will be slaughtered (limited derogations are possible for certain types of holding – these would be decided on a case-by-case basis)

- The carcasses of slaughtered birds and eggs will be destroyed. An epidemiological investigation will be carried out by the veterinary inspector (to identify the possible source of infection and all contact premises)
- Contact flocks will be restricted and investigated. Control measures will be implemented on contact flocks in accordance with Commission Delegated Regulation 2020/687

- Eggs and meat that have originated from the flock during the risk period will be traced and destroyed
- The premises must be cleaned and disinfected
- The premises may not be re-stocked for 21 days after the cleaning and disinfection has been completed

Measures within the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Restricted Zone (HPAI RZ):

The Restricted Zone is divided into two Zones (see Fig 1 below):

- the Protection Zone has a radius of at least **3 km** around the infected premises
- the Surveillance Zone is outside the Protection Zone and has a radius of at least **10 km** around the infected premises
- **Checkpoints** may be put in place to control movements of vehicles transporting poultry or poultry related products into/out of the Zones.
- A Further Restricted Zone may be declared outside the Surveillance Zone if this is considered necessary to control the disease. The measures to be applied in this Zone will be determined depending on a risk assessment carried out at the time.

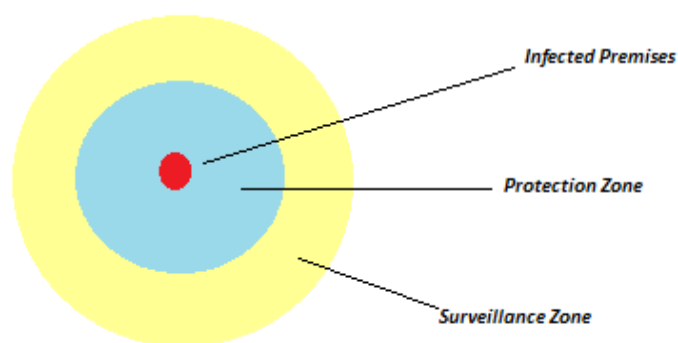


Fig 1 Above: Restricted zone HPAI

Measures in the Protection Zone:

- All poultry and captive birds must be housed or at least isolated from wild birds
- A census of all premises containing poultry or captive birds will be carried out

- All flocks containing poultry or captive birds will be examined by a veterinary inspector at least once before the zone is lifted, and if necessary, samples may be taken for avian influenza testing
- Movements of poultry, other captive birds, other animals from poultry farms, litter/manure from poultry farms, bird carcasses, poultry meat and eggs are prohibited (except under certain conditions and under licence)
- The release of game birds is banned
- Biosecurity measures must be implemented in the case of people and vehicles moving to and from premises containing poultry or captive birds (see **Annex 1**).

Measures in the Surveillance Zone:

- A census of all premises containing commercial poultry will be carried out
- Movements of poultry, other animals from poultry farms, litter/manure from poultry farms, and eggs are prohibited (except under certain conditions and under licence)
- The release of game birds is banned
- Biosecurity measures must be implemented in the case of people and vehicles moving to and from premises containing poultry or captive birds (see **Annex 1**)

The Protection Zone must stay in place for at least **21 days** after the preliminary cleaning and disinfection of the infected premises has been carried out, and then the Zone becomes part of the Surveillance Zone.

The Surveillance Zone must stay in place for at least **30 days** after the preliminary cleaning and disinfection of the infected premises has been carried out.



Suspect/Confirmed Avian Influenza in Wild Birds

All reports of suspect avian influenza cases of targeted wild bird species are investigated by DAFM officials. Suspect birds are collected by trained DAFM and NPWS staff wearing taking appropriate biosecurity precautions including the use of personal protective equipment. The birds are brought to DAFM Regional Veterinary Laboratories and samples are taken for avian influenza testing. Samples are then submitted to the Central Veterinary Research Laboratory (CVRL) where Avian Influenza testing is carried out.

In the event that HPAI is confirmed in wild birds a notification will be sent to both the European Commission and the OIE within 24 hours.

In accordance with Commission Delegated Regulation 2020/687 Articles 63 to 68, any control measures introduced into the area where HPAI has been confirmed in wild birds will be determined by a number of factors including:

- the disease profile and sampling results e.g. the zoonotic potential and effects of the virus
- the estimated population of wild animals of listed species
- the risk factors contributing to the spread of HPAI including the risk of introduction of the disease into poultry and captive bird holdings and any other relevant risk factors

Where determined necessary by DAFM, a **Wild Bird Restricted Zone** may be established surrounding the location where the disease was confirmed and biosecurity measures implemented to prevent the spread of the disease to other birds or humans.

The Wild Bird Restricted Zone may consist of two Areas:

- A **Control Area** with a radius of at least **3 km** around the location where the wild bird was found
- A **Monitoring Area** with a radius of **10 km** around the location where the wild bird was found.

An expert group will be established to assist DAFM with the epidemiological assessment and determination of the limits of the zone. **Checkpoints** to control movements of vehicles transporting poultry or poultry related products into/out of the zone may or may not be put in place, depending on the particular circumstances.

Measures in the Control Area:

- A census of all poultry will be carried out
- Commercial poultry and targeted poultry/captive bird flocks at particular risk will be examined by a veterinary inspector and samples may be taken for avian influenza testing
- Increased surveillance will be carried out at wild bird habitats
- Warning notices will be placed around the area where the infected wild bird carcasses were found
- Checks on biosecurity in poultry flocks will be carried out by Department of Agriculture staff
- Movements of poultry, wild game birds, other captive birds, poultry and wild feathered game meat, hatching eggs, bird carcasses and other animal by-products derived from poultry/birds are prohibited (except under certain conditions and under licence)
- Hunting of wild birds will be banned
- Release of game birds will be banned.

Measures in the Monitoring Area:

- A census of all poultry will be carried out.
- Increased surveillance will be carried out at wild bird habitats.
- Checks on biosecurity in poultry flocks will be carried out by Department of Agriculture staff
- Movements of **poultry and other captive birds** will be prohibited (except under certain conditions and under licence).
- Hunting of wild birds will be banned.
- Release of game birds will be banned.

Additional measures may be introduced in the above areas following a risk assessment.

The **Control Area** must stay in place for at least **21 days** from the date of collection of the wild bird carcasses, and then the Zone becomes part of the Surveillance Zone.

The **Monitoring Area** must stay in place for at least **30 days** from the date of collection of the wild bird carcasses.

Annex 1

BIOSECURITY MEASURES FOR PERSONNEL AND VEHICLES VISITING POULTRY FARMS IN AREAS INFECTED WITH AVIAN INFLUENZA

In the event of an outbreak of HPAI in poultry, all persons entering or leaving premises containing birds in the Restricted Zones must by law observe biosecurity measures. In addition, all vehicles and equipment for transporting live poultry or other captive birds, meat, feed, manure, slurry or bedding and any other material or substances likely to be contaminated must be cleaned and disinfected.

The following must be applied:

1. Poultry sites should be visited only when it is essential to do so
2. Either use dedicated vehicles in the Restricted Zone or arrange schedule so that visits to premises in the Zone are last in the day
3. Owners/persons in charge must keep a record of all visits, including:
 - Cab and trailer registration numbers
 - Driver's name
 - Date and time of visit
 - Date, time and location of vehicle cleaning and disinfection
4. Where possible, delivery/collection should be completed at the perimeter of the site
5. Personnel must avoid walking onto a farm unnecessarily – in particular personnel should not enter the poultry house unless this is essential
6. Follow any additional biosecurity instructions required by the flock owner or DAFM, including signing the visitor's diary
7. On arrival at a site, personnel should:
 - Disinfect footwear in footbath.
 - Put on washable or disposable protective clothing (footwear and overalls).
 - Wash hands
8. Before departure personnel should:
 - Disinfect footwear and protective clothing (or leave on site if disposable).
 - Wash hands

9. Vehicle cleaning and disinfection:

- On arrival at the farm, wheels, wheel arches, outside and underside must be disinfected
- Before leaving the farm, wheels, wheel arches, outside and underside must be washed and disinfected, ensuring that the surfaces are visibly clean
- As soon as possible after use, wash and disinfect all surfaces which may have come into contact with contaminated material, such as:
 - Wheels, wheel arches, outside and underside
 - Trailer
 - Equipment (e.g. trolleys, crates, modules, delivery pipes, sheeting, covers)
- Wipe areas of the driver's cab that may have been contaminated, with disinfectant

10. Drivers should avoid contact with poultry or other birds on premises outside the infected area for at least 3 days (72 hours), if possible.

Only those disinfectants approved by the Department of Agriculture for use against avian influenza should be used. See list on the Department's website at:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/e1453-disinfectants/>

National Disease Control Centre

11th August 2021.