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Published
05/11/2021

National Disease Control Centre

Avian Influenza Alert

Number 06 of 2021

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High Pathogenic Avian Influenza in Ireland

- Ireland has confirmed **Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza virus subtype (HPAI) H5N1 in a wild bird** (Peregrine Falcon - *Falco peregrinus*) in County Galway (see figure 1. Below for location)
- The bird was submitted as part of the Avian Influenza wild bird surveillance programme to Limerick Regional Veterinary Laboratory, confirmatory testing in the Central Veterinary Research Laboratory confirmed subtype H5N1 on November 3rd, 2021.



Figure 1 Location of confirmed case of HPAI H5N1 in a peregrine falcon on 3rd November. Courtesy ADIS.

High Pathogenic Avian Influenza in Great Britain

- Two reports of notifiable avian disease HPAI H5N1 in captive birds were confirmed in England in late October.
- On 2nd November HPAI H5N1 was confirmed in a small backyard flock in North Wales.
- Avian influenza H5N1 has also been confirmed in a flock of captive birds at a premises in Scotland.
- Five HPAI H5N1 events in wild birds have been reported in locations including the east coast of Scotland, the west coast of England and north Wales.

High Pathogenic Avian Influenza H5N1 in Europe

- Since October 1st, 2021, highly pathogenic H5N1 has been confirmed in poultry in Italy (6 outbreaks), Germany (4 outbreaks), Netherlands (2 outbreaks), Denmark (1 outbreak) and Estonia (1 outbreak) and Poland (2 outbreaks).
- HPAI H5N1 has been confirmed in wild birds in Germany, Netherlands, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Denmark and Ukraine.
- Wild bird species affected include Charadriidae (unidentified), Corvidae (unidentified), Anatidae (unidentified), Laridae (unidentified), Anserinae (unidentified), Barnacle goose, White tailed eagle, Common teal, Eurasian widgee, Canada goose, Accipitridae (unidentified), Scolopacidae (unidentified), Common pheasant, Northern Goshawk and the Eurasian eagle-owl.

Risk to Ireland regarding Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza H5N1

- **The disease poses no food safety risk for consumers. Properly cooked poultry and poultry products, including eggs are safe to eat.**
- From October onwards each year we enter into the high risk period for Avian Influenza in Ireland. Colder weather and decreasing daylight can extend the survival time of Avian influenza viruses in the environment
- This is due to the fact that migratory wild birds, the natural hosts of many avian influenza viruses, start to arrive in large numbers to overwinter here.
- Migratory wild birds are known to carry the H5N1 subtype of Avian influenza, and this can increase the level of risk for a potential outbreak of Avian influenza in Ireland
- HPAI H5N1 is a notifiable disease both in Ireland and to the European Commission and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE)
- Any potential outbreak of HPAI H5N1 in poultry in Ireland would impact our international trade for poultry and poultry products
- The disease is highly contagious for birds, but risk of transmission to humans is considered very low

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

Flock owners should **remain vigilant for any unexplained signs of disease** in their flocks, and report any disease suspicion to their nearest [Regional Veterinary Office](#)

- 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. Biosecurity

[Advice on biosecurity to 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

Wild Birds

- Feed and water birds inside or at least under cover
- Clean up any waste feed in outdoor areas frequently
- Use 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.
- Use an [approved disinfectant](#) against Avian influenza in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions

What is DAFM doing to reduce the risk of avian influenza?

- DAFM implements avian influenza surveillance measures which take place right throughout the year in both wild birds and poultry and form part of our well established Early Warning System for the detection of avian influenza. The submission of dead wild birds which are on the target species list for avian influenza surveillance for testing at the Central Veterinary Research Laboratory forms part of this programme
- 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/>

Further information:

DAFM has a wide variety of biosecurity resources for avian influenza- please see:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/7e230-poultry/>

To register a poultry flock:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/service/984df6-poultry-register/>

RVO contact details:

[Regional Veterinary Office](#)

List of target species of wild birds for avian influenza surveillance:

[List of Target Species for Avian Influenza Surveillance](#)

European Commission

https://ec.europa.eu/food/animals/animal-diseases/diseases-and-control-measures/avian-influenza_en

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