



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

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Avian Influenza Update

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National Disease Control Centre

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Avian Influenza confirmed in captive birds in County Down

- On 11 October, following the suspicion of notifiable avian influenza (AI), including initial positive laboratory results in captive birds at a Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT) near Strangford Lough, a Captive Bird Temporary Control Zone has been implemented in the surrounding area to mitigate against onward disease spread
- Samples are currently undergoing additional testing to confirm strain and pathogenicity
- A 3km temporary control zone has been put in place around the infected premises, whereby all poultry and captive birds must now be kept in secure housing or otherwise kept separate from wild birds
- This is the first outbreak of avian influenza in kept birds in Northern Ireland since last February

Risk of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza to poultry and captive birds

- Avian Influenza is **highly contagious for birds**. Due to the Avian Influenza surveillance carried out by DAFM, the disease is known to be circulating widely in seabird populations. The environment can become contaminated with virus through the faeces of infected birds. This presents a potential source of infection for poultry and captive birds
- The presence of Avian Influenza in wild bird populations has been confirmed around the Irish coast, thereby presenting a risk of infection to Irish poultry and captive birds. Biosecurity is the best defence against the spread of disease, including avian influenza, to a poultry flock.
- Although strict biosecurity is always advised, flock owners have been **required** from 19 September 2022, through the introduction of Avian Influenza (Biosecurity measures) Regulations 2022, to maintain **best practice biosecurity measures** to mitigate against the risk of introducing avian influenza into poultry and captive bird flocks
- A copy of the [Avian Influenza \(Biosecurity measures\) Regulations 2022](#) and [Biosecurity measures Regulations accompanying guidance document](#) are also available on the www.gov.ie/birdflu webpage as well as further information on biosecurity
- All poultry and captive owners are reminded to **review** and, **where necessary, improve** their biosecurity procedures on the premises to ensure that all appropriate measures are in place
- Flock owners should **remain vigilant for any signs of disease in their flocks**, and report any disease suspicion to their nearest Regional Veterinary Office

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza situation in Ireland

- There have been no confirmed cases of HPAI H5N1 confirmed in poultry or captive birds in Ireland this year to date
- DAFM has stopped collecting birds for surveillance purposes from coastal counties as the disease has been confirmed to be present around the coast. Surveillance will continue as per current protocols in other counties (1 or more bird of prey-including owls, 3 or more waterfowl-including gulls, 5 or more of any other species of bird)
- Where the Department has sufficient epidemiological surveillance information in particular geographical areas, it will not necessarily collect dead birds for testing
- Where dead wild birds are not collected by DAFM for surveillance purposes, the responsibility for organising the collection and appropriate disposal of animals on public lands e.g beaches, rests with the relevant local authority
- Members of the public are reminded **not to touch sick or dead wild birds**. Dogs should be kept on a lead when walking in areas where sick or dead wild birds are present
- **Poultry owners and those working with poultry** should beware of visiting areas, both at home and abroad, where deaths of wild birds have occurred (e.g. coastal areas, bird colonies, etc.). Direct contact with sick or dead wild birds must be avoided

Month	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sept-22	Total
Number of wild birds with confirmed avian influenza	0	54	13	5	6	6	1	0	0	2	12	47	146

Fig. 1 Number of cases of avian influenza in wild birds confirmed per month.

- An interactive map (for illustrative purposes) courtesy of the Centre for Veterinary Epidemiology and Risk Analysis (CVERA) displaying the location of avian influenza cases in wild birds is available at the following link <https://arcg.is/19zHrf0>



Fig. 2 Locations of cases of avian influenza H5N1 in wild birds in Ireland since 1st July 2022

- Guillemot
- Northern Gannet
- Raven

Strict Biosecurity is Essential to Prevent Outbreaks

All poultry owners and keepers must implement very high levels of biosecurity on their holdings to help protect their flocks due to the current situation. All flock owners should ask themselves the following questions to help ensure you are implementing appropriate measures:

1. Who has access to the poultry areas?

Only allow essential persons access to the poultry houses e.g. husbandry, veterinary care. Ensure that dedicated clothing or disposable personal protective equipment (PPE) is worn including disposable gloves and overalls. Clean and disinfect boots before entering and immediately upon exiting each poultry house. Wash hands each time upon leaving a poultry house. Dedicated personnel should be appointed to manage each site

2. Have I checked the disinfectant points?

All disinfectant points must be maintained. **Read the label** on the disinfectant which is approved for use against avian influenza. Disinfectant footbaths must be changed regularly in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Contamination prevents the effective use of disinfectants. Footwear needs to be cleaned thoroughly before being disinfected in foot dips. **Wait the recommended contact time before entering the house.** Repeat checks with disinfectant points at entry and exit points to the premises

3. Can wild birds get access to the poultry?

Inspect the housing thoroughly. Ensure that there are no gaps where wild birds can enter the housing. Check the gutters and roof. Can contaminated rainwater enter the house? Can wild birds get access to or contaminate the drinking water system?

4. Is the feed and bedding stored securely?

Feed and bedding attract wild birds so secure storage of both is essential. If using straw, ensure it is either double wrapped and covered with a birdproof cover or stored in a shed with no wild bird access. Remove wrapping outside of the house. Feed should be stored in a secure bin and any spills cleaned up immediately. Use wild bird deterrents

5. What do I do about feed delivery/egg collection vehicles that have to come onto the holding?

Disinfect wheels, wheel arches and underbody of all vehicles coming before allowing them to enter the premises and prior to leaving the premises. Do not allow any drivers to enter poultry houses. Ensure that drivers wear disposable gloves and disinfect footwear upon arrival (ensure that there is a disinfectant point near the feed bin/egg storage area)

6. What about equipment?

Any equipment that is used to transport poultry or poultry products must be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected prior to being used on the farm e.g., trolleys, trays, pallets, cages etc. Disposable single-use egg trays or plastic Keyes trays which are thoroughly cleaned and disinfected after each use can be used for egg collections. Don't forget about other equipment such as feeders and watering equipment and clean and disinfect equipment and housing between bird placements

7. Be vigilant

Check the feed and water intake and look for clinical signs of avian influenza. Report any suspicions immediately to DAFM and do not allow anyone on/off the premises pending investigation

Further information 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 higher 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 (WOAH, formerly known as OIE)
- Outbreaks of HPAI H5N1 in poultry in Ireland impact upon our international trade in poultry and poultry products
- The disease is highly contagious for birds, but risk of transmission to humans is considered very low.

DAFM surveillance for avian influenza

- Sick or dead wild birds can be reported to DAFM using the **Avian Check - Wild Bird App** <https://aviancheck.apps.rhos.agriculture.gov.ie>
- Alternatively, sick or dead wild birds may be reported to the local Regional Veterinary Office or contact the DAFM disease hotline on 01 607 2512 (during office hours) or 01 492 8026 (outside office hours)
- Where dead wild birds are not required for surveillance purposes, and are present on public land, it is the responsibility of the local authority to safely dispose of the carcasses
- 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, based on a risk assessment, at the Central Veterinary Research Laboratory forms part of this programme

Current Situation in poultry and captive birds in Ireland

- There have been no further outbreaks of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) H5N1 in poultry or captive birds since December 18, 2021.
- Ireland's self-declared disease-free status for avian influenza was published by the OIE on January 21, 2022. Maintenance of this status which is important for international movements and trade of poultry and poultry products will remain dependent on the absence of any further outbreaks of avian influenza in poultry in Ireland

Current Situation in poultry and captive birds in Europe

- The 2021/2022 HPAI season has been the largest epidemic so far observed in Europe, with approximately 2,500 outbreaks in poultry since October 2021, and almost 48 million birds culled in affected establishments

- HPAI outbreaks have continued to be reported in poultry right through the summer months of June to September with five-fold more infected premises than observed during the same period in 2021, most of which were reported along the Atlantic coast
- Northern Ireland had six outbreaks of HPAI H5N1 in poultry, the latest outbreak was confirmed on February 8, 2022
- England has confirmed 186 outbreaks of avian influenza H5N1, since the H5N1 outbreak started in October 2021. 28 of these outbreaks have occurred since 1 October, 2022. Wales and Scotland have reported 6 and 11 outbreaks, respectively
- The Animal and Plant Health Agency's (APHA) interactive map of restriction zones in England, Scotland and Wales is available to view [here](#)

Current wild bird situation in the rest of Europe

- HPAI H5N1 is currently circulating in wild birds, especially breeding seabirds around the UK's coast
- Large die-offs of several species of colonial breeding birds associated with avian influenza have been reported recently in the Netherlands, Scotland, Iceland, Norway, France, and Greece ([EFSA, 2022](#))
- DAERA have produced an interactive map viewer displaying locations of cases of avian influenza in wild birds in Northern Ireland which is available to view [here](#)
- Over 95% of cases in wild birds have been confirmed to be of subtype H5N1, with small numbers of H5N3 and H5N8 also confirmed

Current global Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza situation

- HPAI continues to be reported in poultry and wild birds globally. The global distribution of outbreaks/ cases in poultry and wild birds during the period 16th March to 10th June 2022 can be found in Fig. 3.

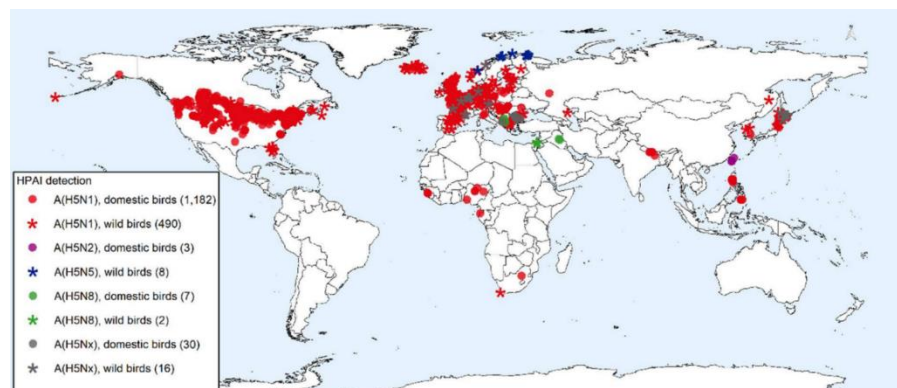


Fig. 3. Global distribution of HPAI in poultry and wild birds from 16th March to 10th June (Source: [EFSA](#))

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

A copy of the Avian Influenza (Biosecurity measures) Regulations 2022 will be available shortly at www.gov.ie/birdflu, as well as an accompanying guidance document and additional species specific biosecurity leaflets

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

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

World Organisation for Animal Health

[Avian Influenza - WOAHA - World Organisation for Animal Health](#)

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