

AVIAN INFLUENZA PREVENTION ZONE (AIPZ): Q&A

Last updated 25 November 2022

1. Should I house my birds?

Yes. From noon 28 November 2022 there is a mandatory requirement to house poultry and captive birds. Such a measure remains under active review as a potentially important biosecurity measure.

2. What measures do I need to comply with in the Prevention Zone?

Full details of the measures contained within the AIPZ can be found at the following link

[Avian Influenza Prevention Zone Declaration | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs \(daera-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/avian-influenza-prevention-zone-declaration)

Some of the requirements include:

- *precautions should be taken to avoid the transfer of virus contamination between premises or parts of premises where poultry or other captive birds are kept, including cleansing and disinfection of equipment, vehicles and footwear;*
- *feed, water and bedding should be stored to minimise the risk of virus contamination;*
- *effective vermin control should be carried out in any part of the premises where poultry or other captive birds are kept;*
- *the movement of people, vehicles or equipment to and from any part of the premises where poultry, game or other captive birds are kept should be reduced to only essential movements for looking after the welfare of the poultry or other captive birds, collecting eggs and feeding.*
- *buildings that house the birds are maintained and any defects that allow water ingress or other contamination to enter the building are rectified without undue delay.*

Bird keepers should speak with their private vets or to their local DAERA Direct office if they have any specific questions about complying with these requirements.

We have published Biosecurity Guidance available [here](#) for all bird keepers to reduce the risk of transmission of highly pathogenic avian influenza. This guidance advises how to minimise the risk of infection on a bird keeper's premises. We have also published a [Biosecurity checklist](#) to aid bird keepers in the review of their biosecurity arrangements and provide the necessary assurances is available.

3. If this costs me extra money will Government reimburse my costs?

There is no requirement on Government to compensate owners for these measures.

4. How long will the measures last?

The AIPZ measures are reviewed regularly to reflect any change in risk. The AIPZ will remain in place until such time that it is either revoked or replaced by a further declaration.

5. Could the zone be lifted early?

The zone will only be lifted if the risk situation diminishes.

6. Which birds does this apply to?

The zone applies to all poultry, including game birds and captive birds, including pets, regardless of species.

7. Can I still fly birds of prey?

Yes, for exercise or training, providing there is no contact with birds from other premises. Contact with wild birds should be avoided.

8. Should I cancel shows, events, school visits etc?

All bird gatherings of galliforme or anseriforme birds within the AIPZ are prohibited.

Galliforme birds include pheasants, partridge, quail, chickens, turkeys and guinea fowl.

Anseriforme birds include ducks, geese and swans.

The bird gatherings general licence for these types of birds has been revoked.

Gatherings of all other types of birds except those mentioned above are permitted, e.g. pigeon, canary and raptor shows, provided that DAERA has been notified of the gathering at least 3 working days before the event and that the gathering meets all the requirements of the general licence.

9. Can I still import birds from Great Britain?

Yes, subject to existing import requirements reflected in the Third Country to EU/NI Export Health Certificate and the usual 6 weeks quarantine for imports of birds from 3rd countries. The only change is that you must follow the AIPZ measures when the birds arrive.

10. Does this affect shooting?

No. Shoots have not been banned in the AIPZ. Where game birds are already released, they are considered to be wild and there is no restriction. Birds in pens should be kept separate from wild birds.

11. What regulations are in place to protect the welfare of the birds if they are required to be housed?

The keepers of all animals must provide for their welfare under the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. All keepers are legally obliged to take all reasonable steps to ensure the 'five needs' as detailed in Regulation 9 of this 2011 Act.

In addition, the Welfare of Farmed Animals Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 specify in detail the welfare conditions in which each common farm animal must be kept.

12. If housing is required, what can I do to keep my birds happy while they are kept indoors?

Environmental enrichment can improve bird health and welfare by reducing disturbances, aggression, injurious pecking, fear responses and stress, and improving leg health by increasing the level of physical exercise. There are a variety of environmental enrichment options for captive birds, including poultry. It is important that you consider introducing activities for your birds, as their welfare is very important.

Providing birds with straw bales, perches, low barriers and pecking objects (such as brassicas, scattered whole grain, plastic bottles and bales of shavings), can significantly increase the amount of time the birds spend standing, walking and running; reduce the amount of time birds spend sitting and resting; and reduce injurious pecking and the number of aggressive interactions between birds. Changing these items when birds lose interest in them will help reduce stress levels and provide mental stimulation for them.

13. What is the penalty for not complying with the measures in the AIPZ declaration?

Non-compliance may be regarded as an offence, which could result in a fine of up to £5,000. However, the main objective of this order is to reduce the opportunity for contact between wild birds and captive birds/poultry. Keepers need to balance costs against effectiveness. It is therefore important that you investigate all options open to you and consider the practicality/feasibility of implementing these measures given your individual circumstances. Please refer to published biosecurity guidance for further help and advice, or contact your local vet or DAERA Direct office.

General Questions

14. What is avian influenza?

Avian influenza (bird flu) is a highly contagious disease of birds that can also affect humans and other mammals. Avian influenza viruses can be classified according to their ability to cause severe disease (pathogenicity) as either highly pathogenic or low pathogenic.

15. What is the difference between highly and low pathogenic avian influenza?

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza viruses (HPAI) is the more serious type. HPAI can cause severe disease in susceptible birds and is often fatal in birds.

Low pathogenic avian influenza viruses (LPAI) is usually less serious and generally causes limited disease or no disease at all in birds. The severity of LPAI depends on the species of bird and whether it has any other illnesses at the same time.

16. How is avian influenza spread?

Avian influenza virus is passed between individual birds, including wild birds and poultry, by ingestion or inhalation. Transmission between managed poultry flocks is the result of breaches in biosecurity practices, principally by movement of infected poultry or exposure to contaminated faeces and respiratory secretions (which may have come from wild birds) on fomites such as equipment or clothing. Direct airborne dissemination between flocks may be important, but usually only over limited distances. Poultry keepers can help prevent avian influenza spread by practicing good biosecurity measures on their premises.

17. What should bird keepers do if they suspect a Notifiable Exotic Disease?

There is a legal requirement to notify your local [DAERA Direct Office](#) if a notifiable exotic disease is suspected. If you are concerned about the health of your birds in any way, you should consult your vet promptly. Anyone keeping animals has a legal duty to report suspicion of notifiable disease.

18. How will Government respond to an outbreak of HPAI in poultry?

If HPAI is found in domestic poultry, a 3 km Protection Zone (PZ) and a 10 km Surveillance Zone (SZ) would be declared. The birds on the infected premises (IP) would be culled. There would be movement restrictions and control on eggs, meat and anything likely to spread disease within the PZ and SZ. Surveillance of poultry and wild birds would be heightened in the SZ.

19. What is the impact on international trade if highly pathogenic H5N1 is found in poultry?

International requirements determine whether a country is regarded as disease free. Currently, for international trade Northern Ireland is included with Great Britain in respect of having lost Country Freedom for HPAI. In the current situation, Trade Certificates have been placed on hold which require HPAI OIE country (i.e. UK) disease freedom, and in addition even where this clause is not specified some other countries have placed additional requirements. As a result, exports must be considered on a case by case basis with the awareness that situations can change.

Once disease is found in poultry in Northern Ireland, there would be additional implications for international trade, which are generally restricted to the immediate area affected. The quickest time taken to regain disease free status following an outbreak is three months after a stamping out policy has been completed on all infected premises, which includes the disinfection of all infected premises and surveillance completed as required by European legislation and the OIE (World Organisation for Animal Health).

It is important to note that an outbreak of avian influenza in backyard flocks or pets would have the same impact on UK trade as an outbreak on a commercial premises.

