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Bia agus Mara  
Department of Agriculture,  
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# Avian Influenza Update

5<sup>th</sup> December 2024

National Disease Control Centre

Number 3 of 2024

### **Avian influenza confirmed in a buzzard Co. Galway**

- Avian Influenza (H5N1) has been confirmed in a buzzard in Co. Galway on 5th December 2024.

### **Introduction of Biosecurity Measures Regulations as of 6<sup>th</sup> December 2024**

- 'Best practice' biosecurity measures as usually advised by the Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine will become **mandatory** for all poultry and captive bird keepers as of 6<sup>th</sup> December with the introduction of S.I. No. 666/2024 - Avian Influenza (Biosecurity Measures) Regulations 2024
- These are precautionary measures to reduce the risk of transmission of avian influenza to poultry in Ireland.
- There will not be a requirement for birds to be permanently housed from this date, nor will there be any restrictions on bird gatherings, shows or sales at this time.
- A guidance document on the measures which must be taken by poultry and captive bird keepers has been developed and is available as an Annex to this update.

### **Strict Biosecurity measures are essential to prevent HPAI outbreaks**

- The introduction and spread of infectious diseases including HPAI is an ever-present risk for poultry flocks.
- Biosecurity is a set of preventative measures designed to reduce the risk of transmission of infectious diseases, the objective being that 'prevention is better than cure'.
- It is a comprehensive approach, encompassing different methods of prevention and containment with responsibility spread across the food chain, from the primary producer in the first instance, to transporters, food producers, slaughterhouses, veterinarians and others involved in animal production and trade.
- All poultry owners and keepers must implement very high levels of biosecurity on their holdings to help protect their flocks.
- General biosecurity information is provided on the DAFM Animal Health & Welfare Biosecurity page [here](#).

### **Highly pathogenic avian influenza (H5N5) detected in poultry flocks in England (as of 02/12/2024)**

Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) has been confirmed in two commercial poultry flocks in England during November 2024:

1. HPAI H5N5 was confirmed in a commercial poultry premises near Hornsea, East Riding of Yorkshire, Yorkshire (05/11/2024).
2. HPAI H5N1 was confirmed in a commercial poultry premises near Rosudgeon, St. Ives, Cornwall (17/11/2024).

- All poultry on the infected premises have been humanely culled.
- A 3km protection zone and 10km surveillance zone has been put in place surrounding both outbreaks.
- There have been 102 cases HPAI in wild birds in Great Britain; 92 cases of H5N5 and 10 cases of H5N1 avian influenza virus detected in wild birds in Great Britain to date in 2024 (as of 21/11/2024).
- The situation in England is evolving. Updates can be found [here](#).

Figure 1 detailing the current HPAI outbreaks in poultry flocks in Great Britain (01/10/2024-02/12/2024)

Source APHA interactive map available [here](#).



### **Increased risk to Irish poultry flocks of an avian influenza incursion**

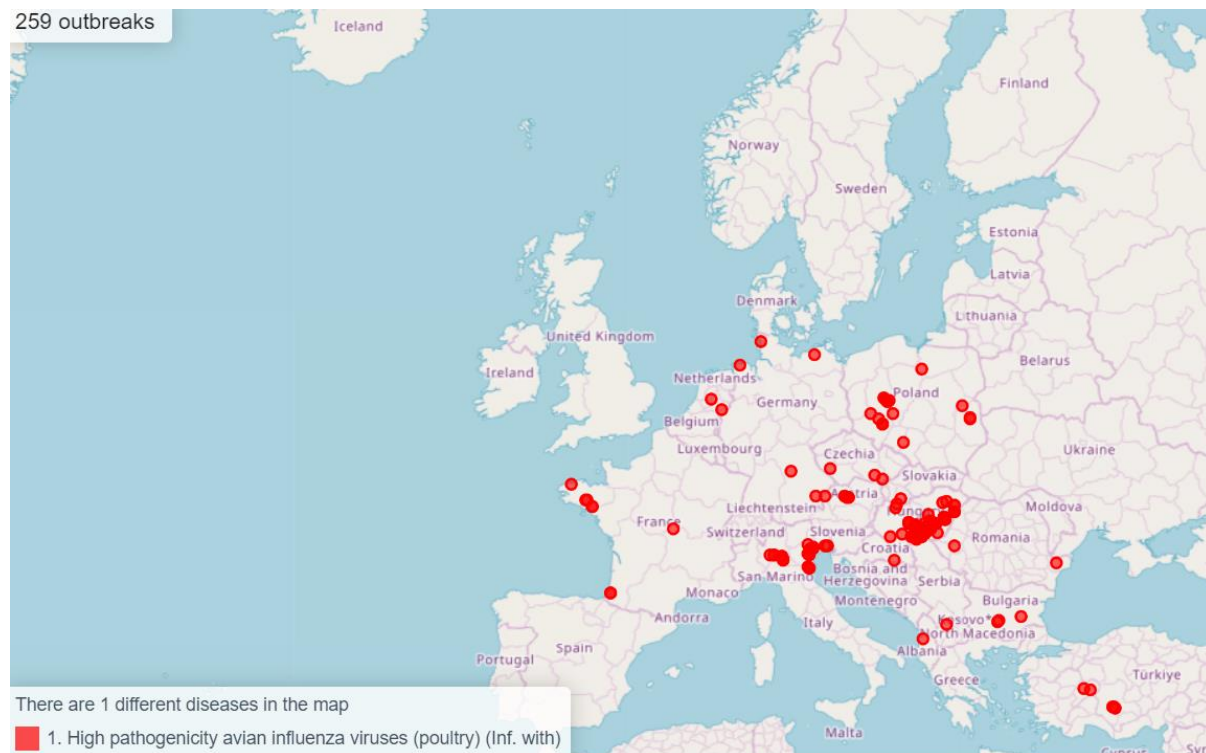
- Ireland has entered the higher-risk period for avian influenza.
- In 2024 (to date), the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) have not detected avian influenza in Irish poultry but one case of H5N1 has now been detected in a wild bird (a buzzard from Co Galway).
- At this time of year, weather conditions and bird migration routes bring a higher risk period for incursion of avian influenza to Ireland. Colder weather and decreasing daylight can extend the survival time of avian influenza viruses in the environment, and migratory wild birds (the natural hosts of many avian influenza viruses) arrive in large numbers to overwinter in Ireland.
- Flock owners should ensure biosecurity standards are implemented consistently.
- All commercial poultry farmers, backyard keepers and those with captive birds should take action to reduce the risk of their flocks becoming infected, for the protection of the Irish poultry industry. Strict biosecurity is the single most important way to prevent disease incursion and to help protect flocks against all poultry diseases, not just avian influenza.
- Poultry flock owners, veterinary practitioners and other relevant stakeholders should continue to remain vigilant for any signs of disease in their flocks and report any disease suspicion, without delay, to their nearest Department [Regional Veterinary Office \(RVO\)](#).

## Current avian influenza situation in poultry in Europe

- Since 1<sup>st</sup> October 2024, there have been 259 outbreaks of HPAI in poultry flocks across Europe reported to the European Commission, the majority in Hungary. All outbreaks involved H5N1, apart from three outbreaks in France (H5N untyped).

Figure 2 detailing the current HPAI outbreaks in poultry flocks in Europe (01/10/2024-02/12/2024)

Source ADIS (Animal Disease Information System).



## Risk to Ireland regarding HPAI

- Avian Influenza is **highly contagious** for birds.
- **Poultry owners and those working with poultry should beware of visiting areas, both at home and abroad, where deaths of wild birds have occurred (coastal areas, bird colonies, etc.).** Direct contact with sick or dead wild birds must be avoided.
- Dogs should be kept on a lead when walking in areas where sick or dead wild birds are present.
- Members of the public are reminded not to touch or handle sick or dead wild birds.
- Dead birds should be reported to DAFM using the Avian Check Wild Bird App:  
<https://aviancheck.apps.services.agriculture.gov.ie/>

## Avian influenza situation in Northern Ireland

- There have been no HPAI outbreaks in poultry in Northern Ireland in 2023-2024 (to date).

- On 15<sup>th</sup> February 2024 avian influenza virus was reported in a swan submitted for official testing as part of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) avian influenza wild bird surveillance.

## **Current avian influenza wild bird situation in Great Britain and Europe**

- Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5N5 has been detected in wild birds in Great Britain this autumn, which has increased the risk levels for HPAI H5 in wild and kept birds.
- In Great Britain in 2024 (to date):
  - H5N5 has been detected in 97 wild birds during 2024.
  - H5N1 has been detected in 16 wild birds during 2024.Source: [Bird flu \(avian influenza\): cases in wild birds - GOV.UK](#) (as of 02/12/2024).
- Since 1<sup>st</sup> October 2024, there have been 270 outbreaks of HPAI (H5N1) in wild birds across Europe reported to the European Commission.

### **\*BE VIGILANT\***

**Check the feed and water intake and look for clinical signs of avian influenza.**

**Report any suspicions immediately to DAFM**

## **Reporting of Sick or dead wild birds to DAFM:**

Avian influenza surveillance measures in wild birds and poultry are conducted by DAFM throughout the year. The submission and testing of dead wild birds which are on the target species list for avian influenza surveillance is a key part of this programme.

If the Department has sufficient epidemiological surveillance information in particular geographical areas, it will not necessarily collect dead birds for testing. When 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.

Current protocols provide for the collection and sampling of dead wild birds in the following circumstances when required: if one or more bird of prey (including owls), three or more waterfowl (including gulls), five or more of any other species of bird are found.

### **Sick or dead wild birds can be reported to DAFM via:**

→ Avian Check Wild Bird App <https://aviancheck.apps.services.agriculture.gov.ie/>

→ local [Regional Veterinary Office \(RVO\)](#) or contact the DAFM disease hotline on 01 492 8026 (outside office hours).

## **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 without delay.

### **1. BE VIGILANT**

Monitor your birds carefully for any clinical signs of disease. If in doubt, contact your veterinary practitioner for advice and report any suspect cases promptly.

#### **Signs of Avian Influenza may include:**

- Death/high mortalities in a flock
- Depression/lethargy
- Loss of appetite
- Respiratory distress (gaping beak, coughing, sneezing, gurgling, rattling)
- Swelling and blue discolouration of combs, wattles, neck and throat
- Gastrointestinal signs (inappetence, diarrhoea)
- Nervous signs
- Reduced egg production or no egg production

### **2. BIOSECURITY**

A copy of the Avian Influenza (Biosecurity measures) Regulations 2024, accompanying guidance document and additional species specific biosecurity leaflets can be found [INSERT LINK TO REGS]

#### **Personnel and Visitors**

- Wear disposable or dedicated outer clothing, 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. **\*Use a registered disinfectant against avian influenza in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, available to view [here](#).**
- Clean and disinfect any vehicles or equipment that encounter 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. Registration is a legal requirement under Irish law. Legislation on registration can be found [here](#).

### **Further information regarding Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza H5N1**

- HPAI H5N1 is a notifiable disease both in Ireland and to the European Commission and the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH, founded as the 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 conduct surveillance for avian influenza.
- Avian influenza poses no food safety risk for consumers. Properly cooked poultry and poultry products, including eggs are safe to eat.

### **Interactive maps for Avian Influenza:**

#### **Europe/Global:**

An interactive map for European and global cases (for illustrative purposes) courtesy of EFSA is available to view [here](#)

### **Please consult the following resources for further information on AI:**

- DAFM has a wide variety of biosecurity resources for avian influenza-please see: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/7e230-poultry/>
- DAFM avian influenza updates: [gov.ie - Avian influenza \(bird flu\) \(www.gov.ie\)](#)
- To register a poultry flock: [gov.ie - Poultry Register \(www.gov.ie\)](#)
- Regional Veterinary Office contact details: [gov.ie - Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine \(www.gov.ie\)](#)
- European Commission [Avian influenza \(europa.eu\)](#)
- World Organisation for Animal Health: [Avian Influenza - WOAHA - World Organisation for Animal Health](#)
- European Food Safety Authority: [Avian influenza | EFSA \(europa.eu\)](#)

**National Disease Control Centre**

**3<sup>rd</sup> December 2024**

## **Avian Influenza (Biosecurity measures) Regulations 2024**

### **Guidance Document for Schedules 1 & 2**

#### **Why has this Regulation been adopted?**

Significant levels of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) subtypes H5N1 and H5N5 or 'bird flu' cases have been confirmed in wild birds, poultry and captive birds in mainland Europe, Iceland and Great Britain during October and November 2024. Avian influenza has been confirmed in a wild bird in Ireland on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2024, when H5N1 was recorded in a buzzard in Co. Galway. This is the first confirmed case of avian influenza in Ireland since September 2023. The confirmation of avian influenza in the wild bird population presents a risk of spread to poultry and captive birds.

DAFM continually advises that all poultry and captive birds' keepers should adopt strict biosecurity standards at all times, in order to help protect their flocks against diseases including avian influenza. This regulation makes that advice a mandatory requirement, to help protect poultry and captive birds from avian influenza at this period when the risk of bird flu outbreaks is higher. This regulation lays out the most appropriate biosecurity advice which must be followed to reduce the risk of an outbreak in Irish poultry and captive bird flocks.

#### **What is Biosecurity?**

Biosecurity refers to practices that help to prevent introduction of disease into a flock, spread within the flock and to leave the flock to infect another one and the local wildlife.

#### **Where do these rules apply?**

For the purposes of this regulation, 'poultry' means birds which are kept for meat or egg production, game birds used as re-stocking supplies, and any birds kept in order to breed these categories of birds.

'Other captive birds' are any birds other than poultry which are kept in captivity.

**Schedule 1** – applies to all land/premises that keep poultry or other captive birds

**Schedule 2** – in addition to schedule 1, schedule 2 also applies to land/premises with over 350 poultry or other captive birds.



## GUIDANCE DOCUMENT FOR SCHEDULE 1

Applicable to ALL land/premises keeping poultry and captive birds.



### Wild Birds

One of the most important biosecurity measures is to prevent contact between wild birds and poultry or captive birds. Poultry can become infected with avian influenza (bird flu) by being in close contact with a wild bird or from contact with an infected bird's droppings or feathers. This is the reason we must not only prevent wild bird access to poultry and captive birds themselves but also to their environment.

- Outdoor areas where poultry and captive birds have access to *must* be fenced or surrounded by netting. This will prevent contact between wild birds and poultry and prevent outdoor areas becoming contaminated with bird droppings/feathers. If wild birds do gain access to poultry areas any droppings/feathers should be removed.
- Poultry should not have access to open water, standing water or waterlogged areas as this will attract wild fowl. Keep these areas well fenced or use netting.
- Avoid attracting wild birds to your holding. Locate all feeding and watering points indoors. Feeding birds outside, not clearing up spilled feed and fallen fruit will all entice wild birds as well as rodents.
- Discourage wild birds from your holding with the use of deterrents such as bird scarers, flutter tape, scarecrows etc.
- Sick and dead wild birds could be carriers of avian influenza. Poultry and captive birds must not be in contact with wild bird carcasses. If you find a sick or dead wild bird, remove your poultry from the area and contact your [Regional Veterinary Office](#) who will arrange to collect the bird and submit it for testing, where appropriate. Sick or dead wild birds can also be reported via the Avian Influenza Hotline **01 607 2512** or **01 492 8026** (outside office hours) or through the Wild Bird-Avian Check App <https://aviancheck.apps.rhos.agriculture.gov.ie/>
- Sick wild birds must not be handled or brought to a premises where poultry or other birds are kept.
- Avoid any contact with wild birds, their carcasses, droppings or feathers where possible. Where this is not possible, ensure that you wear gloves. When removing your gloves, turn them inside-out as you remove them and dispose of them in your household bin. Wash your hands and forearms with hot soapy water. Where water is not immediately available use hand sanitiser until hands can be washed. Clean and disinfect your footwear afterwards, shower and change your clothes.



## Environment

- All poultry houses should be bird and rodent-proof, and always keep the doors closed. Wild birds, especially pigeons and waterfowl, are a particular risk for spreading bird diseases. Bird-proof netting should have apertures no larger than 25mm.
- Check regularly for any holes or leaking in roofs, guttering and downpipes.
- Diseases can be carried on contaminated vehicles. For this reason, staff and service vehicles etc. should be parked outside the perimeter. Only allow essential vehicles onto the site. Insist that all vehicles that do need to enter the site have been cleaned and disinfected beforehand.
- Keep the environment clean and unattractive to wild birds. This includes removal of any spilled feed or fallen fruit, fencing/netting any standing water and preventing overgrown vegetation.
- Removing all visible dirt and contamination can remove up to 99% of disease causing agents.
- Regular cleansing and disinfection (C&D) should be carried out on all concrete walkways, paths and similar surfaces to which poultry and wild birds could have access. C&D should also be carried out when birds are removed from their housing i.e. at the end of a production cycle. This is good practice which will reduce the level of disease causing agents in your bird/poultry housing and should help keep your birds healthier in general.
- Provide footbaths containing [DAFM Registered Disinfectants](#) outside each poultry house. Ensure that the disinfectant is used at the manufacturer's recommended dilution rate and change the disinfectant frequently, especially when the liquid has become visibly dirty..
- Poultry should not be exposed to manure or slurry which could contain bird flu viruses.
- No other animals including pets are to be permitted into poultry/captive bird housing.



## Personnel and Equipment

- Keep movements of visitors, vehicles and equipment onto your holding to a minimum. The less movements onto your holding, the lower the risk of introducing any disease including bird flu.
- Equipment should not be shared between farms as this may lead to spread of disease e.g. trolleys, pallets. Ensure that all equipment used on the farm or for the collection of eggs has been cleaned thoroughly and disinfected with [DAFM Registered Disinfectants](#) made up according to the manufacturer's instructions before each use.

- Do not re-use plastic egg trays which are not thoroughly cleaned and disinfected and do not re-use disposable egg trays as they cannot be properly disinfected.
- It is recommended that anyone with poultry or captive birds at home is not in contact with poultry at any another premises.
- Only allow essential visitors to have access to the poultry site and provide farm or disposable overalls and footwear for visitors and staff. Provide hand-washing facilities and insist that these are used by staff and visitors.
- Use designated clothing and footwear for attending and looking after your birds.
- Where there is more than one poultry house on a holding personnel must prevent spreading any disease from one house to another. Footwear, clothing and any equipment should be cleaned and disinfected between poultry houses.
- If you have staff, give them the information and training they need to maintain good standards of hygiene (an important aspect of biosecurity) at all times. If they keep their own birds at home, they will need to be extra vigilant for signs of disease and even more careful about biosecurity both at home and on your farm.

### **Feed & Bedding**

- Feed and bedding must be stored where animals in particular wild birds cannot gain access. This is to prevent animals from contaminating feed and bedding with their droppings which could be a source of disease.
- Feed and water your birds indoors or under cover so that wild birds and vermin will not be attracted to the area. Remember to clean up any spillages of feed.
- Provide clean drinkable water for your birds. Don't allow them to drink from places which may have become contaminated with wild bird droppings as this could lead to the spread of diseases including bird flu.



### **Records**

- Record all visitors and vehicles that enter your holding, or any premises where poultry or captive birds are kept. In the event of a confirmed case of bird flu in a holding, this would enable DAFM to trace where infection may have come from and track where it may have spread to (track and trace system). This would be a vital part of containing the outbreak. An easy way to do this is by keeping a 'Visitors book' that anyone visiting the farm must sign and

date. Remember to include vehicle registration numbers as these can also carry viruses should they become contaminated with bird droppings etc.

- Record any movements of birds or eggs on and off the holding. You should include the number, species, date of movement, destination of the eggs/birds and the name and address of the person to which they are going. This is to allow tracking and tracing in the event of a bird flu outbreak.



## Poultry

- Only buy birds from a known reputable source - isolate any newly introduced poultry for 2 weeks if possible and attend to your own birds before the new birds.
- Ducks and geese tend not to develop as severe signs of bird flu as poultry such as chickens and turkeys (although this is not always the case). Keep ducks and geese apart from other poultry as they could be carriers of disease without showing signs.
- Poultry or other captive birds must not be able to mix with birds from another holding.
- Check your birds regularly for signs of illness. You can find information on signs of bird flu [here](#). If you have any suspicion that your birds may be affected by bird flu, you are legally obliged to notify DAFM. You may do this by alerting your [Regional Veterinary Office](#)

**\*Please note that this document is for guidance only and is not a legal text.**

## GUIDANCE DOCUMENT FOR SCHEDULE 2

For ALL land/premises with over 350 poultry or other captive birds, ***both*** Schedules 1 and 2 apply.

Land & Premises where poultry or other captive birds are kept must be divided into 3 separate parts:

### 1. Live bird housing/accommodation

- Only essential personnel are allowed access.
- All personnel must change clothing and footwear before entering and on exit.
- All vehicles, in particular wheels and wheel arches, and any equipment must be cleaned and disinfected with [DAFM Registered Disinfectants](#) *both* when they leave and on their return to the holding.
- Records must be maintained of all vehicles and people who enter or exit the holding.

### 2. Ancillary Areas including Storage (feed, water, equipment etc)

- This area must be fully and clearly separated from the live bird housing/accommodation area.
- Only essential personnel are to be granted access following all the usual biosecurity protocols including changing clothing and footwear on both entry and exit.
- Waste and carcasses are to be kept in this area of the premises, where no other animals or vermin can gain access. A suitable lidded (lockable) bin kept outside the perimeter of the holding is ideal so that unnecessary movement of collection vehicles onto the premises is avoided. All vehicles, in particular wheels and wheel arches, and any equipment must be cleaned and disinfected with [DAFM Registered Disinfectants](#) *both* when they leave and on their return to the holding.
- Do not re-use plastic egg trays which have not been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected and do not re-use disposable egg trays.
- The packaging, handling and storage of second quality eggs must be managed in a biosecure manner.

### 3. Restricted access area with a biosecure barrier

- Only essential personnel are to be granted access following all the usual biosecurity protocols including changing clothing and footwear on both entry and exit.
- Non-essential vehicles are not permitted access.

**\*Please note that this document is for guidance only and is not a legal text**