



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

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# **Avian Influenza Update**

**21<sup>st</sup> January 2025**

**National Disease Control Centre**

**Number 2 of 2025**

### Avian influenza confirmed in a third wild bird in Ireland

- A case of avian influenza (H5N1) was confirmed on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2025 by the Central Veterinary Research Laboratory, in a wild Greylag goose found in Co. Donegal.
- This is the third confirmed case of the virus in a wild bird in Ireland since December 2024. The first case was detected in a buzzard, in Co. Galway (5<sup>th</sup> December 2024) and the second case, also a buzzard in Co. Dublin (30<sup>th</sup> December 2024).
- **Members of the public are advised not to handle sick or dead wild birds of any species.**
- **Pet owners are advised to keep dogs on a leash when walking where sick or dead wild birds are, or have been, present.**

### Biosecurity Measures Regulations introduced 6<sup>th</sup> December 2024 remain in force

- While no outbreaks of avian influenza have been detected in poultry in Ireland during 2024 or 2025 to date, the confirmation that this virus is circulating in wild birds means that there is an increased threat to Irish poultry of becoming exposed to, and infected with, this disease.
- 'Best practice' biosecurity measures as usually advised by the Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine remain **mandatory** for all poultry and captive bird keepers since 6<sup>th</sup> December 2024 following the introduction of **S.I. No. 666/2024 - Avian Influenza (Biosecurity Measures) Regulations 2024**
- These are precautionary measures aimed at reducing the risk of transmission of avian influenza to poultry in Ireland.
- There is **not** a requirement for birds in Ireland to be permanently housed from this date, nor are there any restrictions on bird gatherings, shows or sales at this time. Consideration around introduction of additional biosecurity requirements is based on the prevailing epidemiological situation and remain continually under review.
- A guidance document on the measures which must be taken by poultry and captive bird keepers has been developed and is available [here](#).

### 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 the highest levels of biosecurity on their holdings to help protect their flocks.

### Avian influenza situation in Northern Ireland

- On 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> January 2025, avian influenza virus was reported in a wild goose, a buzzard and a whooper swan, found across three separate counties and submitted for official testing as part of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) avian influenza wild bird surveillance programme.
- As a result of these positive cases, the first since September 2023, an Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ) has been introduced from Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2025. The AIPZ places a legal requirement on all bird keepers in Northern Ireland to follow strict biosecurity measures. Further information can be found [here](#). These measures are very similar to the Biosecurity Measures Regulations introduced by the Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine on 6<sup>th</sup> December.
- There have been no HPAI outbreaks in poultry in Northern Ireland in 2024, nor 2025 (to date).

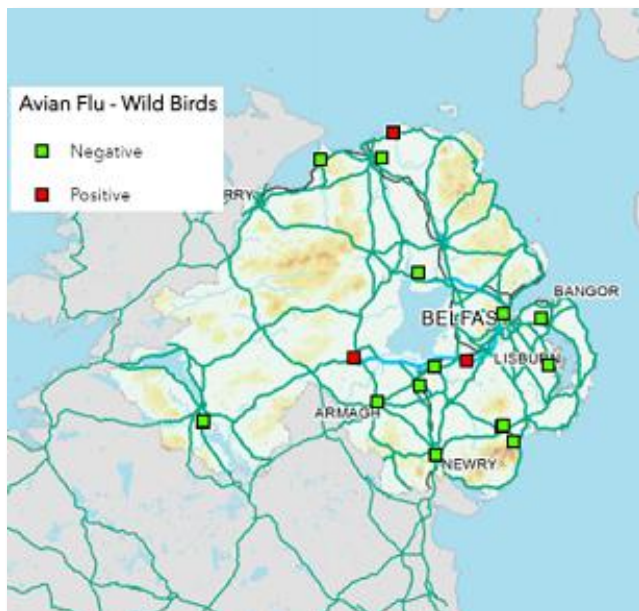


Figure 1. An interactive map indicating current wild bird avian influenza survey results in Northern Ireland can be found [here](#). Map courtesy of DAERA.

## Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza continues to be detected in poultry flocks in Great Britain

- From November 2024 to date, there have been 18 confirmed outbreaks of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in poultry flocks and 2 in captive birds in England and 1 case in a poultry flock in Scotland (10<sup>th</sup> January 2025).
- No cases have been detected in Wales, although part of the surveillance zone of the latest case in England (Shropshire 20<sup>th</sup> January 2025) extends into Wales.
- Where HPAI is confirmed, all poultry must be humanely culled. In addition, 3km radius protection zones and 10km radius surveillance zones around the infected premises are introduced as part of disease control measures.
- Regional avian influenza prevention zones (AIPZ) with mandatory biosecurity and housing measures have been introduced in certain areas of England considered to be at higher risk of disease incursion, due to confirmation of avian influenza in poultry flocks in the area. This is designed to mitigate the risk of further outbreaks occurring. These measures apply to pet birds and backyard flocks as well as commercial poultry.



Figure 2. An interactive map indicating current Animal & Plant Health Agency (APHA) HPAI control zones can be found [here](#). The circular areas indicate current disease control zones around infected premises. The purple shaded area indicates the location of AIPZs with housing measures in place.

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

- Ireland is currently within the higher-risk period for avian influenza.
- 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.
- Avian Influenza is **highly contagious** for birds.
- Flock owners must ensure that the highest possible 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 \(RVO\)](#).
- **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/>

**\*BE VIGILANT\***

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

**Report any suspicions immediately to DAFM**

## Current avian influenza situation in poultry in Europe

- Since 1<sup>st</sup> October 2024, there have been 330 outbreaks of HPAI in poultry flocks across Europe reported to the European Commission.

Figure 3 HPAI outbreaks in poultry flocks reported to the European Commission (01/10/2024-21/01/2025)

Source ADIS (Animal Disease Information System).



## 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 can be found [here](#)

#### 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 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 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 \(europa.eu\)](#)

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