

AVIAN INFLUENZA PREVENTION ZONE (AIPZ): Q&A

Last updated 21 April 2021

1. Should I house my birds?

Mandatory housing restrictions ended at 00.01am on 14 April 2021. If you choose to release your birds you should ensure **any gaps, openings or ranges are covered with netting**. Further guidance can be found on the DAERA website in our Biosecurity and Preventing Welfare Impacts in Poultry and Captive Birds publication.

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

Full details of the measures are contained in the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone declaration which can be found on the DAERA website [here](#)

Some of the kept 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 indoors 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.*

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 and pigeons, regardless of species.

7. Can I race pigeons?

Yes. The ban on bird gatherings and pigeon racing in NI was lifted at noon on 21 April 2021. You are now permitted to race your pigeons provided you meet the requirements of the General Licence.

8. Can I fly birds of prey?

Yes. Contact with wild birds should be avoided.

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

The ban on bird gatherings for pigeons and other small birds in NI was lifted at noon on 21 April 2021. These are now permitted subject to certain conditions under General Licence. There is still a ban in place for gatherings of chickens, ducks, geese and game birds. Please see the General Licence for more details.

10. Can I still import birds?

Yes, subject to existing import requirements for EU and 3rd countries, 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.

11. 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.

12. 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 local [DAERA Direct Office](#)

General Questions

13. 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.

14. 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.

15. 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.

16. 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.

17. What should I do if I find an injured/sick wild bird?

If you find a sick or injured wild bird, please contact your Private Veterinary Practice (PVP). For both the finder and the veterinary practice, we advise if the birds need to be handled, please take appropriate hygiene precautions such as wearing disposable protective gloves when picking up and handling the bird. Please ensure the sick bird is kept away from other wildfowl/poultry on the premises/practice.

18. How will Government respond to an outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza (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, and there is likely to be a national ban on captive bird gatherings.

19. What is the impact on international trade if highly pathogenic H5N8 is found in poultry?

International requirements determine whether a country is regarded as disease free. Once disease is found in poultry there are implications for international trade. The quickest way to regain disease free status following an outbreak is 3 months after a stamping out policy has been completed on all infected premises, which includes the disinfection of all infected premises and surveillance met under obligations to European legislation.

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.

20. If housing was required what regulations are in place to protect the welfare of my birds?

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 was 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.

