

Further action taken to prevent spread of avian influenza in Lancashire

Lancashire residents are being reassured that the risk to public health from avian influenza remains very low, as further action is taken to contain the spread of the virus.

An avian influenza outbreak can occur at any point in the year. However, the UK typically faces a seasonal increase in the risk of an avian influenza associated with the winter migration patterns of wild birds to the UK. These migratory birds may be infected with avian influenza and can go on to infect local wild bird populations or poultry and other captive birds.

The Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) last week confirmed that a strain of avian influenza had been found in the wild bird populations in Lancashire.

Since then, cases have been confirmed at a commercial poultry premises near Salwick and in a small mixed flock of poultry near Kirkham. The regional UKHSA Health Protection Teams are working closely with Defra to monitor the situation and will be providing health advice to persons at the infected premises as a precaution.

If members of the public come across any sick or dead birds it is important that they do not pick them up.

Dead wild birds should be reported to the Defra helpline on 03459 33 55 77. The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) may then collect some of these birds and test them for the presence of avian influenza to help understand how the disease is distributed geographically and in different types of bird, not all birds will be collected. Further information can be found in Defra's advice to the public available on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

Dr Sakthi Karunanithi, Director of Public Health for Lancashire County Council, said: "There is no need to be alarmed by the developments over the last few days.

"The risk to public health from the virus is very low, however it is important that people don't pick up sick or dead birds as this can spread the virus.

"If you do find any dead swans, geese or ducks or other dead wild birds while out and about, please report them to the Defra helpline on 03459 33 55 77.

"I would also urge bird keepers to be vigilant for any signs of disease. Avian influenza is a notifiable animal disease. If you suspect any type of avian influenza in poultry or captive birds, you must report it immediately by calling the Defra Rural Services Helpline on 03000 200 301."

Avian influenza has been confirmed in birds at two premises in Lancashire, one near Salwick and one near Kirkham. A 3km Protection Zone and a 10km Surveillance Zone has been in place around each of these premises. Keepers can check where disease control zones are located and if they are in zone on the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) [interactive map](#).

Further information on these cases and details of the measures that apply in the disease control zones surrounding the premises can be found on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

The control requires anyone who keeps poultry or other captive birds within the 3km Protection Zone to isolate and house their birds and record the name and address of any visitors.

Poultry owners within the 10km surveillance zone do not have to house their birds but must keep detailed visitor records.

It is particularly important bird keepers in the disease control zones consult the definitive requirements set out in the declarations available on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

Road signs at both locations will make people aware as they arrive and leave the zones.

Residents who live in the effected zones will be contacted by APHA with further information.

While the risk to the general public's health is very low, anyone who is concerned should call NHS 111 or speak to their GP.

Mark McGivern, Consultant in Health Protection in the North West at UKHSA, said: "Avian influenza is primarily a disease of birds and the risk to public health is very low.

"We are working closely with Defra to monitor the situation and the regional health protection team will be providing the necessary public health advice to people at the infected premises as a precaution.

"We know the importance of washing hands thoroughly when it comes to reducing the risk of infections. Don't touch any sick or dead birds and make sure to wash your hands thoroughly with soap after contact with any animal."

All bird keepers are reminded that high standards of biosecurity must be maintained as good practice for the health of your birds, and that good biosecurity is an essential defense against diseases such as avian influenza and is key to limiting the spread of avian influenza in an outbreak.

An [Avian Influenza Prevention Zone \(AIPZ\)](#) is currently in place cross the whole of Great Britain to mitigate the risk of the disease spreading amongst poultry and captive birds. That means it is now a legal requirement for all bird keepers in Great Britain to follow strict biosecurity measures to help protect their flocks.

Keepers with more than 500 birds now need to restrict access for non-essential people on their sites, workers will need to change clothing and footwear before entering bird enclosures and site vehicles will need to be cleaned and disinfected regularly to limit the risk of the disease spreading.

Backyard owners with smaller numbers of poultry including chickens, ducks and geese must also [take steps](#) to limit the risk of the disease spreading to their animals.

[Find the area covered by the zone](#)

[Find out more about Avian Flu at gov.uk](#)

[Read the declaration from Defra](#)

[Advice for people who keep birds is available online at gov.uk](#)

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Notes to editors:

- The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) carries out year-round avian influenza surveillance of dead wild birds submitted via public reports and warden patrols. The APHA will collect some of these birds and test them to help us understand how the disease is distributed geographically and in different types of bird, not all birds will be collected.
- Avian influenza is in no way connected to the COVID-19 pandemic which is caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus which is not carried in poultry.

For further information see UKHSA's [advice to the public](#).