



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

Avian Influenza Update

16th February 2021

National Disease Control Centre

Number 02 of 2021

Avian Influenza Regulations remain in effect in Ireland

- Regulations introduced in December which requires biosecurity measures to be taken regarding the confinement of poultry and captive birds to help mitigate the risk of avian influenza remain in place. DAFM published [FAQ's](#) for poultry owners relating to the **Avian Influenza (Precautionary Confinement of Birds) Regulations 2020 (SI No. 663 of 2020)** which are available on the Gov.ie website
- Additional biosecurity regulations introduced in December to help protect poultry and captive birds from avian influenza also remain in force (*SI No.566 of 2020*). A related [guidance document](#) is available to view on the Avian Influenza page of the Gov.ie website. A ban on bird gatherings, marts and assemblies for the purposes of show or sale also remains in place (*SI No.567 of 2020*).

NB. The highest levels of biosecurity are imperative during this high risk period for Avian Influenza in all flocks irrespective of size.

Avian Influenza – Current Situation in Ireland

- There have been no further outbreaks of avian influenza H5N8 confirmed in poultry or captive birds in the Republic of Ireland since a single outbreak which occurred on 10th December 2020. The restriction zones put in place following that outbreak were lifted on 14th January 2021.
- However, there have been further cases of avian influenza H5N8 confirmed in wild birds nationally and **wild birds continue to pose a significant risk for the spread of the disease to poultry and captive birds**. Figures 1 and 2 below detail the outbreaks to date since November 2020.

Avian Influenza – Current Situation in Northern Ireland

- No further outbreaks of avian influenza H5N8 have been confirmed in poultry or captive birds in Northern Ireland since the two separate cases confirmed on January 7th and January 11th
- Since our previous update, the restriction zones put in place following those two separate confirmed outbreaks of avian influenza HPAI H5N8 in poultry flocks in Co. Antrim, have now been lifted
- Restriction zones surrounding the Clough outbreak were lifted on February 10th 2021, with those surrounding the Lisburn outbreak lifted on February 11th 2021.

Avian influenza in wild birds in Ireland

- On 19th January 2021, HPAI **H5N3** was confirmed in 2 knot birds found on Clogherhead, Co. Louth. No further cases of this subtype have been confirmed in Ireland since that date. This subtype has also been confirmed in wild birds in Germany, France, Denmark and Northern Ireland. The HSE Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HSE-HPSC) and the European Centre for Disease Control (ECDC) advise that the risk to public health from H5N3 avian influenza is very low and that the disease poses no food safety risk for consumers
- A total of 28 wild birds have been confirmed with HPAI H5N8 since it was first detected on 10th November 2020 to 15th February 2021
- Wild bird species confirmed with HPAI H5N8 since November 2020 in Ireland include the following: whooper swan (17), mute swan (5), barnacle goose (1), curlew (1), cormorant (1) and peregrine falcon (3)
- Wild bird HPAI cases have been confirmed in counties: Cavan, Cork, Donegal, Galway, Kildare, Limerick, Louth, Mayo, Monaghan, Wexford and Wicklow.



*Figure 1 (above):
Map of confirmed HPAI H5N8 cases
in wild birds in Ireland since 10th
November 2020*



*Figure 2 (above):
Map of confirmed HPAI H5N3 cases in
wild birds in Ireland in 2021*

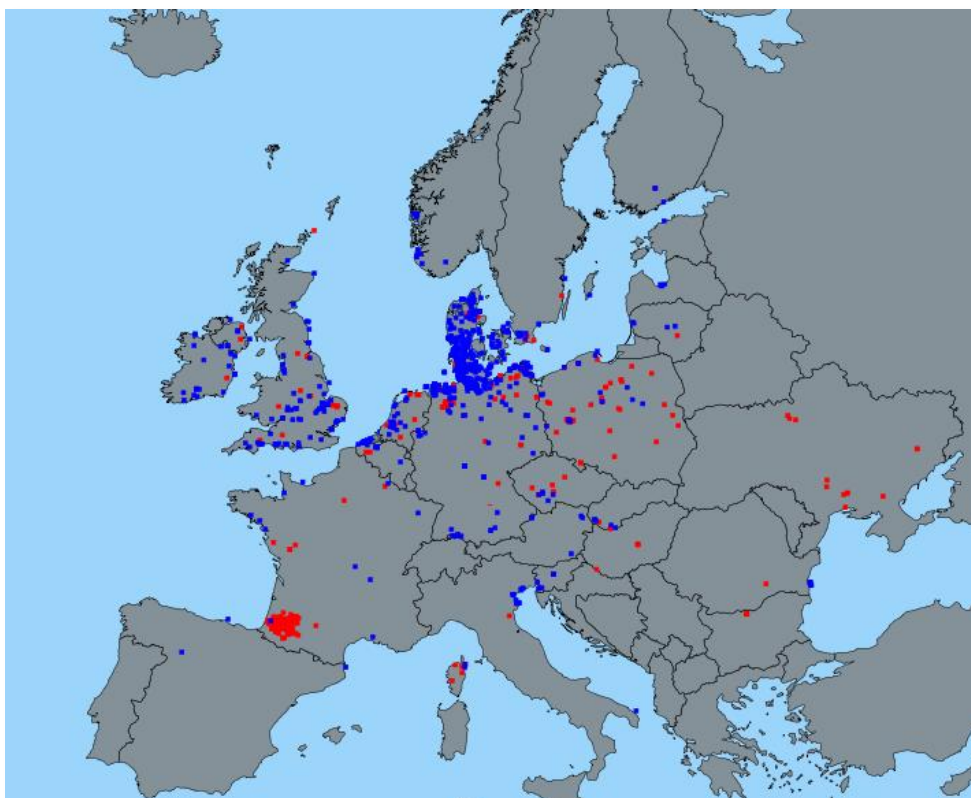
Avian influenza elsewhere in Europe

- Since the beginning of 2021, HPAI H5N8 has been confirmed in poultry in Denmark, Sweden, Poland, Hungary, UK, Lithuania, Slovakia, Germany, Ukraine, Italy, Romania, Czech Republic and France
- France has been the most severely affected European country with nearly 400 outbreaks in poultry and captive birds since the beginning of this year
- HPAI continues to be reported across many countries involving a wide variety of wild bird species (*See Table 1. below*)

Country	Species
Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, Denmark, Ireland, Norway, Poland, France, Italy, Sweden, Czech Rep, Finland, Spain, Austria, Latvia, Estonia	Grey heron, Barnacle goose, Greylag goose, Bean goose, Great egret, Mute swan, Whooper swan, Sandpiper, Buzzard, Mallard, Common kestrel, Black-headed gull, Hen harrier, Peregrine falcon, Common buzzard, Accipitriformes, Sparrow, Garganey (<i>Spatula querquedula</i>)

Table 1. Country list and wild bird species involvement with confirmed HPAI H5N8 cases in 2021

- HPAI H5N3, H5N4, H5N5, H5N*(unspecified N type) subtypes have also been confirmed in wild birds in Europe since the beginning of 2021.



*Figure 3(above) Cases of HPAI in wild birds in blue and outbreaks of HPAI in poultry in red from November 1st 2020 to February 15th 2021
(Courtesy of European Commission Animal Disease Notification System)*

Risk to Ireland regarding HPAI H5N8

- The disease is **highly contagious for birds**
- The disease poses **no food safety risk for consumers**. Properly cooked poultry and poultry products, including eggs are safe to eat
- **Strict biosecurity measures are needed** to prevent the introduction of AI into poultry and captive bird flocks
- Flock owners should **remain vigilant for any signs of disease** in their flocks, and report any disease suspicion to their nearest [Regional Veterinary Office](#)
- **Members of the public are advised not to handle sick or dead wild birds. Please report sick or dead wild birds to the local Regional Veterinary Office or contact the DAFM disease hotline on 1850 200456.**

What can poultry owners do to reduce the risk of avian influenza?

- 1. Be vigilant-** Monitor your birds carefully for any clinical signs of disease. If in doubt contact your veterinary practitioner for advice. Signs of avian influenza include:

- Death/high mortalities in a flock
- Depression/lethargy
- Loss of appetite
- Respiratory distress such as gaping beak, coughing, sneezing, gurgling, rattling
- Swelling and blue discolouration of combs, wattles, neck and throat
- Diarrhoea
- Reduced egg production or no egg production

2. Increase Biosecurity

[Biosecurity guidance to help prevent avian influenza](#) including clinical signs and leaflets can be found on the Gov.ie website

Personnel and Visitors

- Wear disposable or dedicated outer clothing when in contact with your birds
- Wear 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
- Clean and disinfect any vehicles or equipment that comes into contact with the birds after use
- Have suitable pest control in place.

Although advice regarding Avian Influenza protection measures has not changed, the importance of biosecurity in poultry flocks at this time cannot be overstated. This applies to ALL flocks, irrespective of size.

Wild Birds

- Feed and water birds inside or at least under cover
 - Clean up any waste feed in outdoor areas frequently
- Consider using 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
- Register your birds with DAFM so you can receive vital information in the event of an increased risk
- Use an [approved disinfectant](#) against Avian influenza in accordance with the manufacturers instructions
- Implement the measures detailed in the avian influenza regulations detailed above.

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