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AI Alert: 05/2019

- **Avian Influenza situation in Europe - LPAI in Surrey, GB**
- **Winter increases the risk of Avian Influenza - need for vigilance.**

Current situation with Avian Influenza in Europe - H5 LPAI in GB

Low pathogenic avian flu of the H5 strain was confirmed in a flock of 27,000 commercial chickens in Mid Suffolk, on 10 December by the authorities in the UK.

All the birds are being humanely culled and a 1km restriction zone was put in place around the infected farm to limit the risk of the disease spreading.

Whilst low pathogenic avian influenza (LPAI) is a less serious strain of H5 avian influenza, it is significant in that he can mutate into highly pathogenic AI. LPAI can cause mild breathing problems but affected birds will not always show clear signs of infection. The last confirmed case of LPAI in the UK was in Dunfermline in January 2016.

The number of outbreaks of notifiable avian influenza in Europe during 2019 to date has been small compared to recent years. In early October there was an outbreak of H5 LPAI in a flock of free ranging mallard ducks in Central France which was detected as part of the national avian influenza surveillance programme. The birds did not display any signs of the disease.



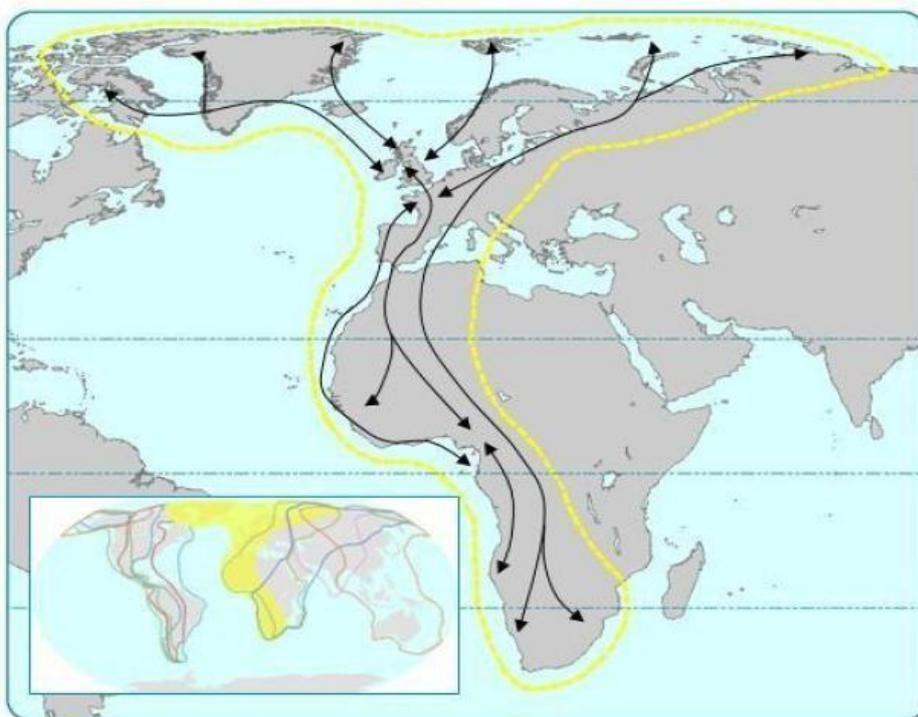
Map 1 showing location of LPAI outbreak in UK
Courtesy of European Commission ADNS system

Winter is the risk period for Avian Influenza outbreaks

From October onwards represents the high-risk period for avian influenza in Ireland because migratory wild birds, the natural hosts of many avian influenza viruses, start to arrive in large numbers to overwinter. Map 2 shows the East Atlantic Flyway which is the migration route used by about 90 million wild birds annually, passing from their breeding areas in United States Canada, Greenland, Iceland, Siberia and northern Europe to wintering areas in western Europe and southern Africa.

Once here, the birds congregate on Ireland's many wetland areas where they mix with resident wild bird species with the potential for both transmission of disease to resident birds and contamination of the environment.

In addition, the colder weather and decreasing daylight hours from this point onwards means that the influenza virus can potentially survive for extended periods of time in the environment also.



Map 2 showing Ireland's position in the East Atlantic Flyway (yellow dashed line) and direction of wild bird migration (black lines)

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. 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
- Blue discolouration of combs, wattles, neck and throat
- Diarrhoea
- Reduced/no eggs production.

If in doubt contact your veterinary practitioner for advice.

2. Biosecurity is key, here is the advice:

People:

- 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.

Wild Birds

- Minimise access to the flock by 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 if possible
- Register your birds with DAFM so you can receive vital information in the event of an increased risk.

What is DAFM doing to reduce the risk of avian influenza?

DAFM has well established early warning systems and contingency measures in place for avian influenza. A summary of these measures can be found at:

https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/avian_influenza/contingencyplanning/

In addition DAFM has initiated its 2019 campaign to raise awareness in relation to the heightened risk of AI during the winter months which will include, in addition to use of standard communication channels, the use of social media to disseminate information on the risk of AI and biosecurity advice (twitter campaign) and placement of add on the trading platform Donedeal aimed at small holdings and hobby farmers to ensure they are aware of the risk of AI and the need for specific biosecurity measures.

NDCC & Border Inspection Posts Division December 2019

Further information:

DAFM has a wide variety of biosecurity resources for avian influenza- please see:

https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/avian_influenza/biosecurityadvice/

To register a poultry flock please see:

https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/avian_influenza/poultryregistration/

RVO contact details

<https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/contact/>

List of target species of wild birds for AI surveillance

<https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/media/migration/animalhealthwelfare/diseasecontrols/avianinfluenzabirdflu/informationonwildbirds/ListOfWildBirdSpeciesForTargetedAISurveillance170118.pdf>

European Commission

https://ec.europa.eu/food/animals/animal-diseases/control-measures/avian-influenza_en