



Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza H5N8 in Ireland:

Frequently asked questions

11th Dec 2020

Please see the following document for general avian influenza information and advice:

<https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/media/migration/animalhealthwelfare/diseasecontrols/avianinfluenzabirdflu/news/AvianInfluenzaFAQsSR131216.docx>

Q1: What is Avian Influenza H5N8?

Answer: The H5N8 subtype of avian influenza is a highly pathogenic subtype of avian influenza which means that it causes severe disease and often death in infected birds. A number of European countries including Great Britain, Netherlands, Germany, France, Denmark, Sweden, Poland, Croatia and Ukraine have confirmed cases of the disease in poultry and/or wild birds in recent weeks.

Q2: Has H5N8 been detected in wild birds in Ireland this year?

Answer: Yes, since the 6th of November 2020, H5N8 has been detected in a total of 9 wild birds in Ireland. The birds were found in a variety of locations including counties Limerick, Monaghan, Wicklow, Mayo, Cork and Kildare. Species affected include peregrine falcon, mute swan, curlew, whooper swan and barnacle goose.

Q3: What is the situation with H5N8 in poultry in Ireland?

Answer: On the 10/12/2020 an outbreak of H5N8 was confirmed in a small flock of turkeys in Co Wicklow. The turkeys have been slaughtered and their carcasses disposed of. An investigation into the outbreak by the Department is underway.

Q4: What is the Department doing to control the H5N8 outbreak, is there legislation in place?

Answer: Yes. Legislation is in place at both European Union (EU) and national level in relation to highly pathogenic avian influenza subtypes such as H5N8. The main legislation is Council Directive 2005/94/EC which sets out what each country in the EU is required to do in relation to the prevention and control of avian influenza and is implemented in Ireland by a specific piece of national legislation. For the current outbreak of H5N8, a protection zone with a radius of 3km around the infected premises and a surveillance zone with a radius of

10 km around the infected premises have been put in place. A variety of disease control measures have been implemented inside these zones including for example, visits to flocks in the zones to establish their health status and a prohibition on the movement of poultry, animals and all other materials from poultry farms located in the zone. The aim of these controls is to pick up disease in other poultry as soon as possible and to prevent spread to other areas.

Q5: Can humans get Avian Influenza H5N8 from live poultry?

Answer: The Health Protection Surveillance Centre has confirmed that although the H5N8 subtype can cause serious disease in poultry and other birds, no human infections with this virus have been reported world-wide and therefore risk to humans is considered to be very low.

Q6: Can avian influenza H5N8 be spread to humans through food?

Answer: There is no evidence that avian influenza can be transmitted to humans through the consumption of properly cooked food such as poultry meat and eggs.

Q7: I am a poultry farmer, what do I do if I suspect avian influenza H5N8 in my flock?

Answer: Any suspicion of avian influenza must be notified to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM). This can be done through your private veterinarian or by contacting your local Department office during normal working hours at <http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/contact/localoffices/> or by calling the avian influenza hotline on **076 1064403**. Having reported a suspicion on avian influenza you must not allow any birds, people, carcasses, or anything else to be moved off the premises until such time as a Veterinary Inspector from the Department has visited your premises and carried out an examination of the birds.

Clinical signs of avian influenza can be found at:

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

Q8: I am a free range/backyard poultry farmer, should I bring my birds indoors?

Answer: As a result of the H5N8 outbreak, all birds on premises located within the restriction zones must be kept indoors. Currently poultry outside of the zones are not required to be kept outdoors. However this is being kept under constant review and if a risk assessment by DAFM determines that all poultry should be confined, legislation to implement that requirement will be introduced.

Q9: What else can I do to protect my birds against H5N8?

The Department advises strict adherence to the precautionary measures against avian influenza (bird flu) recently introduced in regulations under the Animal Health and Welfare Act 2013. These Regulations require specific biosecurity measures to be implemented by the keepers of all poultry (and other captive birds), irrespective of flock size, to help mitigate the risk of the virus and additional enhanced biosecurity measures that must be implemented in flocks of 500 birds or more. The legislation can be found here:

<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2020/si/566/made/en/print>

Further avian influenza biosecurity advice can be found at:

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

Q10: What should I do if I come across a dead wild bird?

Answer: Members of the public are advised not to handle sick or dead wild birds and to report them to the Regional Veterinary Office or contact the Department disease hotline on 1850 200456. If possible they will be collected and tested for avian influenza as they are an important part of the epidemiological picture for the disease.

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