

## Avian influenza (bird flu)

# Summary of rationale for proposed avian influenza Higher Risk Areas in England from 28 February

17 February 2017

All UK poultry continue to be at a heightened risk from H5N8 Avian Flu from direct or indirect contact with infected wild birds, in particular ducks, geese and gulls. Since December 2016 we have found infection in 19 different locations across GB.

Given the risk, we must continue to be vigilant and take steps to:

- reduce the likelihood that birds with access to outside areas (range) come into contact with wild birds, including gulls; and
- ensure increased biosecurity measures are in place to prevent indirect infection of poultry and captive birds, whether they are kept outside or housed.
- raise awareness of where the risk is likely to be higher.

On 8<sup>th</sup> February, we announced that subject to no significant changes in risk levels, our intention from 28<sup>th</sup> February, when the current AI Prevention Zone expires, is to take a more targeted approach to disease controls.

This is based on the best scientific evidence, taken from a range of veterinary and disease experts, including the Government's Chief Vet.

We have considered the way disease has spread in the UK and the rest of Europe; surveillance evidence from across Europe; the types of wild birds infected and the environmental and biological factors implicated in disease spread. We have concluded the risk remains heightened, but that areas of England close to substantial inland or coastal bodies of water (where significant numbers of wild birds collect) are at an even higher risk, with duck species having the greatest risk of carrying the H5N8 infection.

The closer a poultry premises is to such bodies of water, the greater the risk that disease will be carried into it by foraging wild birds, especially ducks. The level of risk to premises reduces, as the distance increases, and the likelihood of foraging wild birds being present declines. While it is vital that enhanced biosecurity must remain across all areas we have concluded, in England, biosecurity preventative measures alone will not provide sufficient protection to poultry in these **Higher Risk Areas** (HRAs). From 28 February, we intend to require poultry and captive birds in these areas to continue to be housed or kept in fully netted enclosures, to help reduce the risk of further outbreaks.

The **Higher Risk Areas** have been identified as those areas within a defined distance of a high density of wild waterfowl, specifically duck species, where there may be an increased risk from direct or indirect contact with wild waterfowl.

The Higher Risk Area map at

<http://www.gisdiseasemap.defra.gov.uk/intmaps/avian/map.jsp> has been revised following further detailed analysis of the data and is based on a combination of areas with more than 5,000 wild waterfowl and areas identified by experts as areas where migratory waterfowl congregate. A distance of 5km around a 2km grid of each location is used as the foraging distance for duck species; this encompasses the majority of flights from a roosting site from which ducks travel each day to look for food. Although gulls are implicated in the spread of bird flu, the risk from these species can be reduced by adopting the enhanced biosecurity measures.

We have published more detail of the rationale and approach at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/avian-influenza-bird-flu-in-europe>.

The map, together with all our disease control measures will be kept under review. We will make a final announcement on the AI Prevention Zone from 28<sup>th</sup> February in due course.