

Aim To Sustain Avian influenza Q & A

It is incumbent on the shooting community to play its part in helping to reduce the spread and impact of the current outbreak of Avian Influenza. This document has been created to help all in the shooting world understand how they can reduce the possibility of spreading AI through their activities. This is not an exhaustive list and will be updated as the situation evolves. It should help most people ensure their activities minimise the chances of spreading AI. It is vital that the shooting community continues to behave responsibly.

Glossary of Terms

- AI Avian Influenza, also known as Bird Flu.
- IP Infected Premises, a site where infection has been confirmed as present, usually in captive birds.
- PZ Protection Zone, a circular area 3KM in radius around an IP where disease control measures apply.
- SZ Surveillance Zone, a circular area 10KM in radius around an IP where disease control measures apply. It includes the PZ. In some circumstances a disease control zone may be smaller than 10KM in radius.
- Collectively, PZ's and SZ's are known as Disease Control Zones.
- CBZ Captive Bird Monitoring Zone, a 3KM radius protection zone put around an IP involving small numbers of birds that can be classified as non-poultry in certain circumstances. A CBZ does not have a larger surveillance zone around it.
- AIPZ Avian Influenza Prevention Zone, A disease prevention measure applied more generally to an area or country requiring all keepers of birds to comply with certain disease prevention measures, regardless of their proximity to an IP. An AIPZ may be Regional or National and may or may not include a Housing Order.
- H/O Housing Order, sometimes included in an AIPZ, a housing order requires all captive birds to be housed (unless subject to an exemption) to reduce the likelihood of their coming into contact with wild birds. All Housing Orders to date have included an exemption for over-wintered gamebirds although certain biosecurity provisions may be required – details will be contained in the Housing Order.
- AGHE Approved Game Handling Establishment
- FSA Food Standards Agency

Frequently Asked Questions

1. How is avian influenza spread?

Avian influenza spreads from bird to bird by direct contact or through contaminated body fluids and faeces. It can also be spread by contaminated feed and water or by dirty vehicles, clothing and footwear.

There is currently no evidence to suggest that AI is an airborne virus.

There are 2 types of avian influenza. Low Pathogenic and High Pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI). The current outbreak is associated with a high pathogenic strain H5N1. Low Path AI is not normally a serious condition (mild respiratory symptoms) but can mutate into high path AI.

2. How do I know if I am in a disease control zone?

When avian influenza is confirmed or suspected in poultry or other captive birds, disease control zones are put in place around the IP to prevent the spread of the disease. Within these zones a range of restrictions on the movement of poultry and material associated with their keeping can apply. An easy way to find details of these are on the Governments [interactive map](#) and in Northern Ireland on [DAERA's interactive map](#).

3. What about AI in Wild birds?

Government agencies carry out routine surveillance of disease risks in relation to AI and monitoring of findings (the term commonly used) in Wild birds (there are details around reporting such findings below). Details can be found [here](#)

4. If any part of my shoot or estate falls into an AI Disease Control Zone, can we still shoot?

There are currently no restrictions on shooting in either a PZ or an SZ. The Government reserves the right to impose restrictions on a wide range of activities (shooting included) if it deems the outbreak to pose a threat to human health. Organisations will advise their members further if this situation develops. It is important to remain vigilant and monitor developments as the outbreak continues.

5. Can shot game be moved within a disease control zone?

There are currently no restrictions on the movement of gamebird carcasses from shoots located in a disease control zone and no restrictions on their entering the food chain. Some AGHE's and other game dealers may not be prepared to accept game shot in a PZ or SZ as it may compromise their export status. All shoots should consider how their bag will be used in light of any restrictions.

Public Health England (PHE) advises that the risk to public health from the virus is very low and the Food Standards Agency has confirmed that on the basis of the current scientific evidence, avian influenza poses a very low food safety risk for UK consumers. Properly cooked poultry and poultry products, including eggs, are safe to eat.

6. What biosecurity measures should be taken on a shoot?

Everyone, involved in game shooting should consider what biosecurity measures they should take. Particular care should be taken by anyone who has been on or close to an infected site, and they should consider appropriate actions so that they do not act as a vector for the disease.

Good biosecurity is an essential defence against diseases such as AI and is key to limiting its spread during an outbreak. It is important to note there may be specific requirements within disease control zones and AIPZ's for those with kept birds which must be followed.

When considering biosecurity on a shoot we should be looking for ways to:

- Reduce close contact between wild birds and game birds.
- Reduce the risk of transmission onto a shoot from another shoot by the guns/beaters/pickers up.
- Reduce the risk of spread of disease on site between pens/drives/beats.

As with other shoot assessments, measures to be implemented should be carefully considered, relevant and proportionate, documented, and shared with all those involved.

Factors such as proximity to Disease Control Zones may be relevant. Where necessary, shoot operators are recommended to seek advice from their specialist gamebird vet or membership organisation on suitable measures for their situation, and any additional record keeping that may be beneficial. It is important to note that within disease control zones there may be legal requirements for those with captive birds.

7. Are foot dips a good idea?

Yes, but they are only one part of the process and to be effective they must contain a suitable AI [approved disinfectant](#) and be correctly used. For example, any disinfectant is only effective if the object to be disinfected is clean, hence the term "cleaning and disinfection". Prior to disinfection any item must be thoroughly cleaned and then placed in the disinfectant for the recommended minimum time relevant to the prevailing conditions. Factors such as temperature will have an effect on the efficacy of any disinfectant product. Be aware that some disinfectants may be corrosive when selecting your footwear.

Also consider your vehicle (especially the footwells) and any precautions that you should take to minimise the possibility that you could be responsible for spreading AI from one location to another.

Use only suitable DEFRA AI approved disinfectants. They must be used at the correct dilution rate, and they must be replaced / replenished as necessary. See manufacturer's guidelines for use.

8. Is there any specific advice for Gundogs?

The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) [risk](#) assessment (in relation to the spread of AI from wild birds to poultry) notes that they are unaware of any dogs becoming infected with avian influenza by retrieving shot wildfowl or gamebird but elsewhere such as America and Canada scavenging species such as foxes and coyotes have been infected. Therefore, suitable precautions should be taken such as not feeding uncooked shot or culled birds to dogs and not allowing them to eat dead wild birds. Well-cooked birds can be safely consumed by humans and animals alike. In certain circumstances it may be appropriate to wash a dog after it has been out (with a pet appropriate shampoo) and if you and your dog have been on areas such as known infected sites you/they should not then work on other shoots until you are satisfied that you have eliminated the potential for spreading AI. Where required, further advice should be sought from your vet or membership organisation.

9. What signs should I look for on the game farm/shoot of AI in gamebirds?

There are many symptoms of AI, depending on the strain and the species infected. Click [here](#) to visit the Government's advice on how to spot AI. If birds have lost condition, it is most likely not bird flu. If in any doubt speak to your vet.

10. If I think my game birds have AI, what should I do?

This will depend on whether the birds in question are captive or wild.

For captive birds (those without the ability to come and go at will) AI is a notifiable animal disease. If you suspect any type of AI in poultry or captive birds, you must report it immediately by calling the Defra Rural Services Helpline on 03000 200 301. In Wales, contact 0300 303 8268. In Scotland, contact your local Field Services Office. In Northern Ireland call the DAERA helpline 0300 200 7840.

Failure to do so is an offence.

If you suspect your birds are infected with any disease then contact your specialist gamebird vet immediately. Your vet will advise you and what you should do.

For wild birds (including previously released gamebirds) you should call the Defra helpline (03459 33 55 77) if you find:

- one or more dead bird of prey or owl
- 3 or more dead gulls or wild waterfowl (swans, geese and ducks)
- 5 or more dead birds of any species **including game birds**

You should not pick up or touch wild birds you suspect have AI until after you have contacted DEFRA and they have given you advice.

Calls to the DEFRA helpline concerning dead wild birds are triaged and not all birds will be collected. The criteria for which birds are collected are adjusted to increase or decrease the sensitivity of surveillance.

11. If I find dead wild birds on my property and AI is suspected, do I need to collect the carcasses after I have reported it?

If dead wild birds are not needed for avian influenza surveillance purposes i.e., if the relevant government agency has chosen not to collect them (or there are more carcasses than have been removed) and the landowner has taken the decision to remove carcasses, it is the landowner's responsibility to safely arrange disposal of the carcasses. You need to consider personal protective equipment for staff who would be picking up dead birds as well as very strict bio-security protocol for staff, clothing and vehicles.

Any carcasses collected must be disposed of as category 1 animal by-products if it is suspected that the animals were infected with a notifiable disease such as AI. You will need to arrange for a suitable waste disposal contractor to collect from your site and all appropriate biosecurity measures must be adhered to.

12. Can other shooting activities such as crop protection, wildfowling or deerstalking still take place within disease control zones?

Yes, there are currently no restrictions on any shooting activities but as with game shooting, all participants should carefully consider what biosecurity measures are appropriate to their activity and location. Also consider any implications disease control zones could have on game meat that results from your activity, e.g., pigeons, ducks, etc. Check with your AGHE (game dealer) before taking birds or deer carcasses to their premises.

13. Can game be released?

Within disease control zones (PZ's and SZ's) release of game is prohibited. Additionally, a housing order (these can be implemented as part of an AIPZ) also prevents the release of gamebirds anywhere in the area it applies to, whether regional or national.

14. What advice is there for Guns?

Follow the relevant above advice where applicable but also liaise with your host in good time to see if there are any specific actions which they require you to do. Should you be 'taking' a days' shooting and it needs to be cancelled as a result of AI, you should refer to the relevant terms and conditions relating to the booking and consider if insurance for cancellation is appropriate.

15. Where can I get more information and how can I keep up to date with any changes?

For further information and details of the measures that apply in the disease control zones currently in force see:

England: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/avian-influenza-bird-flu-cases-and-disease-control-zones-in-england>

Wales: <https://gov.wales/avian-influenza-bird-flu-latest-update>

Scotland: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/avian-influenza-bird-flu/>

Northern Ireland: <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/avian-influenza-ai>

To receive immediate notification of new cases and updated zones in GB please sign up to the APHA's Animal Disease alert subscription, service further details can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apha-alert-subscription-service>

Further information can be found in the Game Farmers' Association document [Bird Flu and Gamebirds: Standing Advice](#) This guidance has been prepared by game shooting, research and game conservation bodies. It is endorsed by Defra, Scottish Government, Welsh Government and DAERA in Northern Ireland

Contact your Shooting Organisation for further advice and support where necessary.

All keepers of 50 or more birds are legally required to register their details on the Government Poultry Register. Click [here](#) to register.

This includes gamebirds released for sporting purposes, however brief their period of captivity.