

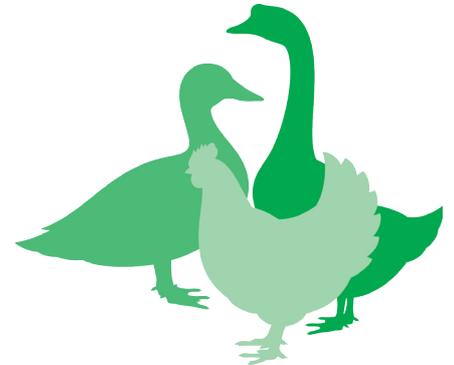


How to keep your birds safe from Avian Influenza (bird flu)



Avian Influenza, also known as bird flu, is a disease that affects all types of poultry including chickens, ducks and geese. A severe strain of the disease, H5N8, has been found in wild and captive birds in the UK.

Poultry keepers across England are currently required to take action to reduce the risk of disease spreading. This guide is designed to help keepers of small flocks of poultry in England look after their birds and protect them from disease.



How bird flu spreads

Bird flu can be passed from wild birds to poultry, causing birds to fall ill and die. It can be transmitted directly from bird to bird or via the environment, for example in wild bird droppings. The virus can survive in the environment for at least 50 days in cooler weather.

This means if you keep poultry, including chickens, ducks or geese, even as pets, you must take action to prevent direct and indirect contact with wild birds.

Risks to human health are very low and bird flu does not pose a food safety risk.

What do I need to do if I keep poultry?

From 28 February a new Prevention Zone comes into force which requires all keepers in England to take action to protect their birds.

All poultry keepers must comply with strict disease prevention measures.

Exactly what you need to do depends on where you live.

Keepers in some areas of the country will still be required to keep their birds indoors or under completely netted structures.

This is because based on extensive scientific evidence the risk from wild birds in these areas is higher.

To find out whether you're in one of these higher risk areas, search our interactive map using a postcode, place name or grid reference:

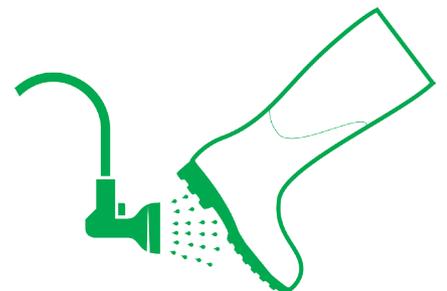
www.gisdiseasemap.defra.gov.uk/intmaps/avian/map.jsp



Reducing the risk of infection

All poultry keepers, wherever they are in England and even if their birds are inside, must follow these steps to reduce the risk of infection via the environment, for example in wild bird droppings:

- **Keep food and water supplies inside** where they cannot be contaminated, feed birds inside and keep them away from standing water.
- **Minimise movement** in and out of your birds' enclosure and clean footwear before and after visits.
- **Keep the area where your birds live clean and tidy**, removing spilled feed.
- **Make sure you have effective vermin control** in the area where your poultry are kept.
- **Put foot baths and a boot brush with a Defra-approved disinfectant at the entrance** to all areas where birds are kept.



If you are outside the higher risk areas

The safest option to minimise contact between your poultry and wild birds is to keep them inside or under netting.

However, if you are outside the higher risk areas, you can choose to let your poultry outside provided you have taken some additional steps to minimise the risk of infection from wild birds before you do so.

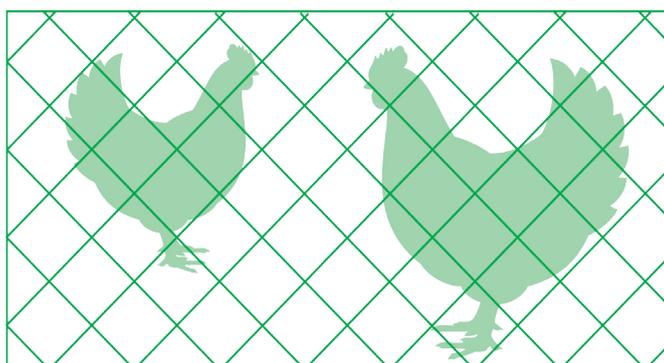
These are designed to reduce the risk of contamination from the outside areas, and to make these areas as unattractive to wild waterfowl as possible:

- **Make sure outdoor areas are fully fenced** so birds cannot roam outside them, and any ponds or water areas are netted and covered.
- **Regularly check your property for wild birds** and take steps to discourage any you find – you might want to think about scarecrows or visual bird-scarers.
- **Remove any feeders and water stations** from the outside area, or make sure they are covered to sufficiently restrict access by wild birds.
- **Regularly clean and disinfect hard areas** like concrete walkways that your poultry or wild birds have access to.

If you think your birds' health and welfare is still at risk, you should continue to house your birds or keep them in covered runs or netted areas. If you are in doubt, talk to your private vet.

Full guidance on the steps you need to take can be found at:

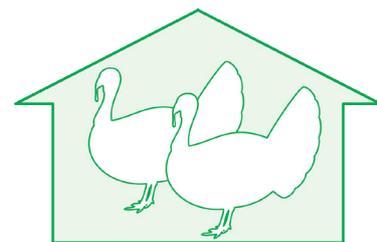
www.gov.uk/guidance/avian-influenza-bird-flu



If you are in a higher risk area

If you are in a higher risk area, by law you must continue to keep your birds housed or otherwise separate from wild birds.

This means where possible keeping birds in a suitable building, like a shed or outbuilding adapted to house them, or a temporary structure like a lean-to or polytunnel.



Put netting over openings to stop wild birds getting in and remove any hazardous substances.

You can also keep them in a fully fenced run fully covered by netting.

Protecting your birds' welfare

It is your responsibility to ensure your birds' welfare while indoors and keep them calm and comfortable:

- If you keep several types of birds, **house chickens or turkeys in separate enclosures from ducks and geese.** Check the birds regularly to ensure they are healthy and have enough food, water and dry bedding.
- **Keep the environment interesting** to reduce the risk of feather pecking. Add fresh bedding, straw bales, perches and objects such as cabbages, scatter feed or grain on the floor and add grit to litter to encourage birds to scratch.
- **Make sure birds have natural light** where possible and are not permanently in the dark. Light should ideally follow typical day and night patterns.
- **You may want to consider nutritional supplements** in drinking water that can help keep birds calm.
- Skin parasites like red mite can be a problem in birds kept indoors and can make birds more irritable. **Advice on controlling parasites can be obtained from your vet.**



Signs of Avian Flu

Signs include loss of appetite, swollen heads and respiratory problems. **If you suspect bird flu call the Defra helpline on 03000 200 301.**

Further information

Further details can be found at www.gov.uk/guidance/avian-influenza-bird-flu