



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 recently been found in wild and captive birds in the UK. This guide is designed to help keepers of small flocks of poultry look after their birds while there is a prevention zone in place.

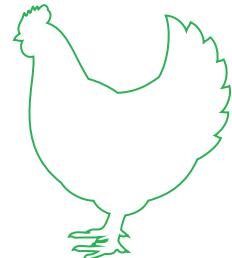
How bird flu spreads

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.

To reduce the risk of bird flu spreading from bird to bird there is currently a legal requirement for all birds to be housed or otherwise kept separate from wild birds.

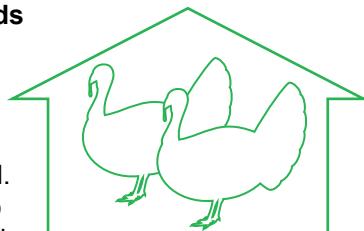
This means if you keep poultry, including chickens, ducks or geese, even as pets, you must take action to prevent contact with wild birds and protect them from this potentially fatal disease.

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



Protecting your poultry

Where possible, move birds into a suitable building, like a shed or outbuilding adapted to house them, or a new temporary structure like a lean-to or a polytunnel. Put netting over openings to stop wild birds getting in and remove any hazardous substances.



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

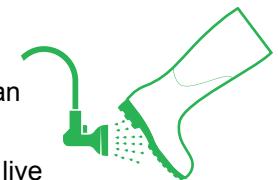
- If you keep several types of birds, house chickens or turkeys in separate enclosures from ducks and geese. Check the birds regularly to ensure they are healthy and have enough food, water and dry bedding.
- Keep the environment interesting to reduce the risk of feather pecking. Add fresh bedding, straw 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.

Reducing the risk of infection

If you don't have a suitable building to move your birds into, or the welfare of the birds would suffer if moved indoors, you must take sensible precautions to keep them away from wild birds.

You should follow these steps to reduce the risk of infection via the environment, for example in wild bird droppings, even if your birds are inside.

- Keep food and water supplies inside where they can not be contaminated, feed birds inside and keep them away from standing water.
- Where birds remain outside, set up a temporary enclosure covered with netting that wild birds can not access.
- 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.



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