

Take 5 To prepare



Resilience and specialist operations team briefing note:

Avian Influenza H5N1 (Bird Flu)

Since November 2021, there have been several cases across the UK of Avian Influenza, more commonly known as avian or bird flu. Avian Influenza (AI) is a notifiable animal disease effecting poultry, captive birds, wild birds such as gulls or birds of prey and waterfowl and is caused by a variety of viruses adapted to birds. AI is similar to swine flu, dog flu, horse flu and human flu as an illness caused by strains of influenza viruses that have adapted to a specific host. Out of three types of influenza viruses (A, B & C), influenza A virus is a zoonotic infection with a natural reservoir almost entirely in birds. Avian Influenza most commonly presents as strains of 'A' virus based on their pathogenicity, with four strains causing concern in recent years – H5N1, H7N9, H5N6 and H5N8. Currently H5N1 is of utmost concern to scientists.



H5N1 is an emerging Avian Influenza causing global concern as a potential pandemic threat, and has killed millions of birds throughout several continents, normally spread by contact between infected (or dead) and healthy birds. The disease can be spread from bird to human and although very rare can be fatal in humans. The general population is NOT at risk from Avian Influenza; those deemed to be at risk are workers on poultry farms, animal control workers, ornithologists and wildlife biologists; however, with the correct PPE the risk of infection from bird to human is extremely low.

Guidance during an Avian Influenza outbreak urges all bird keepers to retain birds within a closed environment to minimise the chance of infection. If an AI outbreak is identified in your area, the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) will invoke an outer and inner cordon around the infected premise with entry control in operation. Routinely a 3km warning zone in the locale around the effected site will be established with advisory signs displayed and cull of the infected birds will begin. The UK Health & Security Agency (UKHSA formerly PHE) will liaise with DEFRA, APHA and CQC's to ensure that any workers or handlers of the infected birds are prescribed Tamiflu and monitored over a set period. There should be no impact upon Ambulance or wider health services. However, in the unlikely event that EEAST is required to attend a site with a suspected or confirmed outbreak of AI, the following procedure should be adopted: -

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- Report to Entry Control Point (ECP) for access to outer cordon. Crews are required to don Level 2 PPE with JSP/FFP3 instead of surgical mask. If the DEFRA representative at the ECP advises contrary information, check with the Duty NILO before proceeding.
- Only HART crews with enhanced PPE should enter the inner cordon or any building containing birds – donning full ground kit and breathing apparatus as PPE before entry.

Any crew entering the outer cordon will have to go through the standard procedure of stepping into a boot wash on entrance and exit to help minimise contamination and reduce the spread of the virus.

Symptoms of Avian Influenza may include but are not limited to:-

- High temperature / muscle aches / headache
- Shortness of breath with or without chest pain
- D&V
- Stomach pains
- Bleeding from nose and gums
- Conjunctivitis

In Summary

- There is no risk to staff responding within the 3km warning zone
- Staff may enter the outer cordon if required following the above PPE guidance
- Only HART staff may enter an inner cordon if wearing the PPE advised above
- Access to any infected property will always be gate controlled
- Local NHS surgeries will be notified of all persons having come into contact with infected birds and prescribed Tamiflu
- UKHSA will monitor everyone prescribed Tamiflu daily ten days post event – should a person become symptomatic with flu like symptoms UKHSA will arrange and co-ordinate swabbing
- There should be no impact to EEAST

Further information or clarity around Avian Influenza and the expected EEAST response to an incident on an infected site can be provided by a Resilience Manager at

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