# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | **All Wales Avian Influenza Prevention Zone** |
| **DATE** | **3 November, 2021** |
| **BY** | **Lesley Griffiths MS, Minister for Rural Affairs and North Wales, and Trefnydd** |

On 27 October, the Chief Veterinary Officer for England confirmed a case of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) H5N1 at a wild bird rescue centre in Worcestershire, England. Further to this case in England, on 2 November, and following a number of wild bird positive findings of AI across Wales, England and Scotland, the Chief Veterinary Officer for Wales confirmed a case of HPAI H5N1 in a small backyard flock of chickens in Wrexham.

A risk assessment has been prepared in light of these findings, and on 1 November, the UK risk level for disease incursion in wild birds was raised from medium to high. Additionally, the risk to poultry has been increased from low to medium, where biosecurity is inadequate. Effective biosecurity measures play a vital part in helping to reduce this risk.

As a precautionary measure, in response to the increased risk level and to mitigate the risk of infection to poultry and other captive birds by wild birds, I am declaring an all Wales Avian Influenza Prevention Zone, under Article 6 of the Avian Influenza and Influenza of Avian Origin in Mammals (Wales) (No. 2) Order 2006. The Prevention Zone will apply from 17:00 on 3 November 2021.

The Prevention Zone will require all keepers of poultry and other captive birds, irrespective of how they are kept, to take appropriate and practicable steps, including:

* Ensure the areas where birds are kept are unattractive to wild birds, for example, by netting ponds and by removing wild bird food sources;
* Feed and water your birds in enclosed areas to discourage wild birds;
* Minimise movement of people in and out of bird enclosures;
* Clean and disinfect footwear and keep areas where birds live clean and tidy;
* Reduce any existing contamination by cleansing and disinfecting concrete areas, and fencing off wet or boggy areas.
* Keep domestic ducks and geese separate from other poultry.

Keepers with more than 500 birds will also be required to take extra biosecurity measures, including restricting access to non-essential people, changing clothing and footwear before entering bird enclosures and cleaning and disinfecting vehicles.

This Avian Influenza Prevention Zone will remain in place until a reduction in risk levels indicates it is no longer required. The Zone will be kept under regular review.

With one confirmed finding of avian influenza in poultry in Wales, in addition to wild bird cases, I consider this Prevention Zone and the requirement for enhanced biosecurity to be proportionate to the risk level we face. It is essential we take proactive steps to protect our poultry industry, international trade and the wider economy in Wales.

We all have a responsibility to prevent disease and protect the health of our National flock in Wales. All keepers of poultry and other captive birds will need to comply with the requirements of the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone. Keepers must remain vigilant for signs of disease. Avian influenza is a notifiable disease and any suspicion should be reported immediately to the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA).

Housing controls are not currently being made mandatory under the requirements of this Prevention Zone. Good, stringent biosecurity measures are our best defence against all animal diseases, and for many bird keepers this Prevention Zone will not change the strict steps currently taken to protect your birds. However, this is an opportune moment for everyone to review biosecurity practices and consider whether more can be done. The conditions in the Prevention Zone are a minimum all keepers must comply with as we face this disease risk. Individual bird keepers may decide housing their flocks at this stage is necessary to protect them, and mandatory housing has not been ruled out as an additional measure which may be introduced by Government at a later stage as we continue to review the disease risk and gain a better understanding as the situation develops.

In reviewing and increasing biosecurity measures, I urge all keepers to consider housing their birds and how to introduce such measures, should housing become mandatory as part of the Prevention Zone.

I continue to strongly encourage all poultry keepers, even those with fewer than 50 birds, to sign up to the Poultry Register. This will ensure they can be contacted immediately, via email or text update, in an avian disease outbreak, enabling them to protect their flock at the earliest opportunity.

Information on the requirements of the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone, guidance and latest developments will be available on the Welsh Government website.