How to keep your birds safe from Avian Influenza

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 Avian Influenza spreads

Avian Influenza 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.

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 cannot be contaminated, feed birds inside and keep them away from standing water.
- Try and make the area where your birds live as unattractive to wild birds as possible ensuring that there is no standing water, spilled feed etc and consider using bird scarers where possible.
- 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. Cleanse and disinfect 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 avian influenza, it is vital to report it immediately to the Animal and Plant Health Agency on 0300 303 8268.

Further information
Further information on avian influenza can be found on the Welsh Government website.

Poultry Register
All poultry keepers, including those with fewer than 50 birds, are encouraged to provide details of their flocks to the Poultry Register. This will ensure that you can be contacted immediately in an avian disease outbreak so that you can take action to protect your birds at the earliest opportunity.