

Cabinet Secretary announces a new Avian Influenza Prevention Zone

Lesley Griffiths has also confirmed there will be some important changes to the measures that will apply within the new all-Wales Prevention Zone.

The current Prevention Zone requires all keepers of poultry and other captive birds to keep their birds indoors or take all appropriate steps to keep them separate from wild birds, and to enhance biosecurity. This follows a number of confirmed cases of Avian Flu across the UK, including in a backyard flock of chicken and ducks near Pontyberem, Carmarthenshire.

Expert advice suggests it is unlikely the current level of risk will change before the current Prevention Zone is scheduled to end on 28 February. In view of this, and following consultation with industry and veterinary representatives, the Cabinet Secretary has decided to put in place a new Prevention Zone, that will take effect from midnight on 28 February.

The new Avian Influenza Prevention Zone requires all keepers to complete a self assessment of biosecurity measures on their premises. The objective being to keep domestic flocks totally separate from wild birds by continuing to keep birds housed or using other measures, which may include permitting controlled access to outside areas, subject to the introduction of additional risk mitigation measures.

The Cabinet Secretary said:

“My decision to put in place a new Avian Influenza Prevention Zone until 30 April is based on sound expert and industry advice.

“The risk of infection from wild birds is unlikely to decrease in the coming weeks. The changes I am announcing today are proportionate and place the onus on the keeper to select the best option for their circumstances to protect their birds. They must, however, ensure compliance with the additional risk mitigation measures”.

The Chief Veterinary Officer for Wales, Christianne Glossop added:

“Keepers of poultry and other captive birds 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. Keepers should practice the highest levels of biosecurity if they are to minimise the risk of infection.

“I continue to strongly encourage all poultry keepers, even those with fewer than 50 birds, to provide their details 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".