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PR 10897

Protection zone in place after new bird flu case

Birdkeepers living in the Market Bosworth area are being urged to follow a range of restrictions after a case of bird flu was confirmed.

Trading Standards officers from Leicestershire County Council will be knocking on doors and sending letters to properties within a 3km zone to give bird owners advice and where necessary, arrange a health inspection by the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA).

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has put 3km and 10km zones in place within which all bird keepers have to follow increased biosecurity measures to limit the risk of the disease spreading.

The council's highways teams are also putting up information signs to inform drivers they are entering an area with restrictions.

The fifth case in Leicestershire follows recent outbreaks at commercial poultry premises near Barrow upon Soar in Charnwood and a rise in cases across the country.

Councillor Deborah Taylor, cabinet member for regulatory services, said: "It's important we all do what we can to reduce the spread of the disease and we are continuing to work closely with the Government. I'd urge all bird keepers to follow the legal requirements, including registering flocks where required, and although the risk to residents is very low, I'd remind people not to touch or pick up any dead or sick birds."

UK Chief Veterinary Officer Christine Middlemiss said: "We have taken swift action to limit the spread of the disease but we are continuing to see a growing number of bird flu cases on farms and in backyard flocks across the country. Whether you keep just a few birds or thousands you must take action now to protect your birds from this highly infectious disease.

"It is now a legal requirement to keep your birds indoors to keep them separate from wild birds which spread the disease. It is also vital that you maintain strong biosecurity by regularly checking and maintaining sheds and cleaning and disinfecting footwear to limit the risk of the disease spreading. Don't walk the virus into your hens."

Bird keepers in the area must now follow a range of restrictions relating to the movement of poultry and material associated with their keeping.

Find out if you're in a disease control zone and details of the restrictions: www.gov.uk/guidance/avian-influenza-bird-flu-cases-and-disease-control-zones-in-england

The UK Health Security Agency has confirmed that the risk to public health is very low and the Food Standards Agency has said that bird flu poses a very low food safety risk for UK consumers. Properly cooked eggs and poultry are safe to eat.

Notes

From 29 November, national measures mean that all captive birds must be housed to reduce the risk of access to wild birds in order to limit the spread of and eradicate the disease.

This means that all poultry keepers across the country must:

- House or net all poultry and captive birds to keep them separate from wild birds
- Cleanse and disinfect clothing, footwear, equipment and vehicles before and after contact with poultry and captive birds – if practical, use disposable protective clothing
- Reduce the movement of people, vehicles or equipment to and from areas where poultry and captive birds are kept, to minimise contamination from manure, slurry and other products, and use effective vermin control
- Thoroughly cleanse and disinfect housing on a continuous basis
- Keep fresh disinfectant at the right concentration at all farm and poultry housing entry and exit points
- Minimise direct and indirect contact between poultry and captive birds and wild birds, including making sure all feed and water is not accessible to wild birds

These housing measures will be kept under regular review as part of the government's work to protect flocks.

People are being warned not to touch or pick up any dead or sick birds they find. Anyone who finds dead swans, geese, ducks or other dead wild birds, such as gulls or birds of prey, should report them to the Defra helpline on 03459 33 55 77.

Bird keepers must report suspicion of bird flu in poultry and other captive birds to the Defra Rural Services Helpline on 03000 200 301. Failure to do so is an offence. Flocks can be registered on the National Poultry Register at www.gov.uk/government/publications/poultry-including-game-birds-registration-rules-and-forms . This is a legal requirement if you have 50 or more poultry. Poultry includes chickens, ducks, turkeys, geese, pigeon (bred for meat), partridge, quail, guinea fowl and pheasants.

More information is available at www.gov.uk/guidance/avian-influenza-bird-flu

Ends

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