

How to prepare for when your birds can be let outside again

Bird flu (avian influenza) is spread between birds through direct contact or indirectly via faeces, droppings, contaminated objects, land or water. If poultry, such as chickens or turkeys, are infected with bird flu they will likely show signs of illness, whereas waterfowl, such as ducks and geese may become sick, but can also carry the virus without showing signs and can easily spread it to other birds without there being any signs of the birds being infected.

The increased risk of bird flu from all wild birds and contaminated environment is likely to persist in the UK for several weeks or possibly months, but there are several actions that you can take to help protect your birds.

Actions you need to take to protect your birds

Make the range (the outdoor area birds have access to) unattractive to wild birds, particularly wild waterfowl, corvids (e.g. crows and magpies), or gulls

- **Net or cover ponds** – you must net or cover any ponds that are within the fenced range area. You should also consider netting ponds or larger bodies of water, within 100 m of the perimeter of the outdoor area if within your premises. If this is not possible, you should take steps to deter birds from accessing them.
- **Fence off ponds, streams, standing water or wet or boggy areas** – whilst the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ) remains in place, poultry must not be allowed access to areas around ponds, streams, canals or other wet areas, as there is an increased risk that these areas have been contaminated by the droppings of wild birds.
- **Remove any wild bird feed sources** – check the range and surrounding areas for any feed sources that might attract wild birds: these are most likely to be associated with wet areas, but also include spilt grain, seeds, and uncovered feed bins. All feeding of your birds must be undertaken under cover.

Keep wild birds off the range

There are several ways that you can deter wild birds (in particular gulls and wild waterfowl) from landing on and feeding on the range. These include, regularly walking the area, using predator decoys, and using wild bird visual bird scarers or other novel bird scaring devices (for example, light lasers). Bird scarers can annoy and disturb the public and there may be local restrictions on their use, so please use them in a considerate way. Good Practice Guidance can be found in the [NFU Code of Practice](#).

Decontaminate and sanitise the range

Where the range has not been used for several months, it may have been contaminated by wild bird faecal matter or feathers. This is particularly important if you are changing the area accessed by free-ranging birds. For example, when moving mobile arks or fencing off areas not previously used for poultry.

The virus that causes avian influenza can remain infective in faeces or droppings and other contaminated material for around 50 days (longer in wet conditions or in standing water). If wild birds have had access to your ranges and other outdoor areas, you must take steps to reduce the levels of contamination.

You could:

- **Cleanse and disinfect concrete and other impermeable areas** – use a [government-approved disinfectant](#) at the recommended dilution rate for the Diseases of Poultry Order. Appropriate pollution prevention measures must be followed (see the section below).
- **Decontaminate the range** – it may be possible to reduce the level of the virus present in heavily contaminated areas by exposing the surface to sunlight and drying, e.g., by cutting the grass (don't forget to cleanse and disinfect the equipment used). Inspect your range regularly and remove any obvious contaminants from wild birds (such as faeces or feathers) in a biosecure manner. This may be removed by scraping, while minimizing soil disturbance, to avoid attracting wild birds, followed by the use of certain [government-approved disinfectants](#) at the recommended dilution rate. Many approved disinfectants will quickly become inactivated when sprayed on organic material (such as soil), so are unlikely to be effective. You should consult the manufacturer for advice on whether the product you want to use is likely to be effective and follow appropriate pollution prevention measures.
- **Drain wet patches and areas of standing water** – In the longer term and subject to obtaining the necessary consents and agreements, consider whether it is possible to fill in or drain any permanent ponds or areas of standing water or low-lying areas which frequently become flooded. Consult the relevant authorities before undertaking any permanent works that might impact biodiversity.

Reduce spread by people or objects

- Limit the number of people who have access to the range and ensure that they have no contact with any other poultry or birds.
- If people have to enter the range, ensure they have dedicated footwear and outer protective clothing. Covered foot dips must be used upon entry and exit to houses and outdoor areas/ranges where birds are kept. Remember to change or disinfect your footwear when accessing houses from the range.

- Redouble your care with respect to personnel biosecurity barriers to avoid tracking wild bird faeces into the house.

Disinfectants: pollution prevention and control

You do not need to get prior approval from the Environment Agency in England, Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) in Scotland, or Natural Resources Wales before applying any disinfectants to concrete areas or the range area provided the volume and concentration of disinfectant applied are in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and at the recommended dilution rate.

Appropriate pollution prevention measures must be followed in all cases to stop excessive uncontrolled disinfectant runoff. Disinfectants must not be applied close to drinking water supplies or surface water bodies.

In Wales it is a legal requirement for all keepers within the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone to complete a biosecurity self-assessment checklist which can be found [here](#).

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