

# About avian influenza

## How to spot avian influenza

There are 2 types of avian influenza.

Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) is the more serious type. It is often fatal in birds. The main clinical signs of HPAI in birds are:

- swollen head
- blue discolouration of neck and throat
- loss of appetite
- respiratory distress such as gaping beak, coughing, sneezing, gurgling, rattling
- diarrhoea
- fewer eggs laid
- increased mortality

Clinical signs can vary between species of bird and some species may show minimal clinical signs (ducks and geese).

Low pathogenic avian influenza (LPAI) is usually less serious. It can cause mild breathing problems, but affected birds will not always show clear signs of infection.

The severity of LPAI depends on the type of bird and whether it has any other illnesses.

## How avian influenza is spread

The disease spreads from bird to bird by direct contact or through contaminated body fluids and faeces. The avian influenza virus changes frequently, creating new strains, and there is a constant risk that one of the new strains may spread easily among people. But there is no evidence that any recent strain of avian influenza has been able to spread directly between people.

Avian influenza isn't an airborne disease.

## Prevention Zone

An [Avian Influenza Prevention Zone declaration](#) (PDF, 157KB, 2 pages) was declared by Defra on 6 December 2016. This means extra biosecurity measures for all poultry and captive birds to protect them from the risk from wild birds. The zone covers the whole of England and will remain in place for 30 days (until 6 January).

The zone requires the immediate and compulsory housing of domestic chickens, hens, turkeys and ducks, or where this is not practical, their complete separation from contact with wild birds. For farmed geese, gamebirds and other captive birds, keepers should take practical steps to keep these birds separate from wild birds.

## Biosecurity

If you keep poultry you must keep a close watch for any signs of disease. If you have any concerns about the health of your poultry, you must quickly seek advice from your vet.

All bird keepers must now take extra biosecurity steps, including:

- minimising direct and indirect contact between poultry and wild birds
- making sure that feed and water can't be accessed by wild birds
- taking all reasonable precautions to avoid the transfer of contamination between premises, including cleansing and disinfection of equipment, vehicles and footwear
- reducing the movement of people, vehicles or equipment to and from areas where poultry or captive birds are kept
- implementing effective vermin control programmes around buildings where poultry or captive birds are kept
- thoroughly cleansing and disinfecting housing and equipment at the end of a production cycle
- keeping disinfectant at the right concentration at key points such as farm entrances and entrances to bird houses

Poultry keepers should read our detailed information about how to house their birds and keep them separate from wild birds, and about the extra biosecurity measures:

[Link to](#) Biosecurity and Preventing disease in captive birds within a prevention zone