
New measures to help protect keepers, their birds and the general public from notifiable avian diseases

From: <Elizabeth.Tidy@gov.scot>

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Dear Colleague,

Subject: New measures to help protect keepers, their birds and the general public from notifiable avian diseases

As you may be aware, a GB-wide consultation took place in 2023, facilitated by Defra on behalf of the Scottish Government, the Welsh Government and the UK Government, regarding the registration of kept birds in GB. [The joint-government response and summary of responses to the poultry registration consultation was published on gov.uk.](#)

As a result, all GB administrations have laid legislation that requires all bird keepers – even those who keep only a single bird – to officially register their bird location(s). Currently, only those who keep 50 or more poultry must do so, limiting the effectiveness of our national disease control measures. In Scotland, this legislation is the [Avian Influenza \(Preventive Measures\) \(Scotland\) Amendment order 2024](#).

In Scotland, keepers have between 1 September and 1 December 2024 to register the location of their birds on the new **Scottish Kept Bird Register (SKBR)**. Those previously registered on the GB Poultry Register will be required to re-register on the SKBR between these dates.

In England and Wales, keepers are encouraged to register their birds ahead of the legal deadline on 1 October 2024.

The new requirements apply to owners of commercial and backyard flocks, birds of prey, pigeon fanciers, and all other captive birds (including pets), but do not apply to birds on premises that belong to the order *psittaciformes* (parrot family, including budgerigars) or *passeriformes* (perching birds, including jays and finches), **which have no outdoor access and are housed within a fully enclosed structure.**

By registering their birds, keepers will ensure they receive important updates relevant to them, such as on any local avian disease outbreaks and important information on biosecurity rules to help protect themselves and their flocks.

This will help to manage potential disease outbreaks, such as avian influenza and Newcastle disease, and limit any spread. The information on the register will be used to identify all bird keepers in disease control zones, allowing for more effective surveillance, so that zones can be lifted at the earliest possible opportunity, freeing keepers from disease control restrictions.

These changes come following the UK's worst ever outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), with more than 360 cases across Great Britain since late October 2021, including in a significant number of backyard flocks. We have also seen a change in the epidemiology of the disease. Prior to 2021, HPAI in the UK was seasonal, and outbreaks would start when wild waterfowl migrated into GB in autumn, and would end when these wild waterfowl departed in summer. During the last three years, the circulating strain of HPAI H5N1 was detected in a **wider range of wild bird species, with maintenance of the virus in different native UK wild bird species throughout the summer months.** We have also observed **spill-over of infection into a broad range of mammalian hosts globally**, highlighting the potential for viral adaptation and a resultant increased zoonotic risk (risk of disease transmitting from animals to humans).

The SKBR will be launched on 1 September 2024 and will provide a one-stop-shop registration portal for all keepers with birds in Scotland, taking less than 10 minutes to register. The system will allow Scottish keepers to populate, access and amend their information at any time, whilst also prompting keepers to refresh their information on a 12-month rolling basis (in line with legislation). The aim of this online system is to encourage registration through provision of a simple, user friendly tool, whilst significantly increasing the scope and accuracy of the information that is available to the Animal and Plant Health Agency during an outbreak scenario.

Further information on the registration of birds can be found on gov.scot, gov.uk and gov.wales.

Please share this information with any of your organisation members, friends or family as appropriate.

Your sincerely,

Chris Bain

**Scottish Government Policy Officer
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