

Biosecurity Poultry Guidance

Better Biosecurity Provides: Peace of Mind, A Healthier Flock and a More Viable Business

All Poultry keepers need to be aware of the need for strict biosecurity and hygiene on their premises:

Why should I read this?

The Department wants to help you prevent your birds from becoming ill. In particular, you should now:

- Review and assess your risk of disease with your vet.
- Plan how you will manage any free range birds if there is a need to isolate them from wild birds.
- Feed and water birds indoors where possible to reduce mixing between your birds and wild birds.
- Practice good biosecurity.
- Be vigilant and monitor your birds frequently.

There is more detail below.

Biosecurity is important

Biosecurity means taking steps to ensure good hygiene practices are in place so that the risk of a disease occurring or spreading is minimised. Good biosecurity should be practised at all times, not just during a disease outbreak. Taking the right measures at all times can help protect your birds, your business, the industry and the community.

What are the Benefits:

- **HELPS KEEP OUT epizootic diseases such as Newcastle disease and avian influenza**
- **REDUCES THE RISK of zoonotic diseases such as salmonella becoming established**
- **LIMITS SPREAD of diseases and HELPS TO PROTECT your neighbours, public health and the countryside**
- **IMPROVES overall flock health**
- **CUTS COSTS of disease treatment**
- **REDUCES LOSSES and could improve farm profitability**

How Disease Spreads:

- **Movement of poultry, people, vehicles and equipment between and within farms**
- **Introduction of birds of low or unknown health status**
- **Contact with neighbours' flocks**
- **Using shared farm equipment and vehicles which have not been effectively cleansed and disinfected**
- **Contact with vermin and wild birds**
- **Birds drinking from contaminated water sources**
- **Birds eating contaminated feed**
- **Unsatisfactory cleaning and disinfection of vehicles, sheds, feeding troughs and other equipment**

Actions now and planning ahead

Whether you already practice strong biosecurity or not, the Department is encouraging all bird keepers to follow the following steps:

- Look at the guidance on local risk assessment available on the DARD website [enter DARD website link].
- The risk assessment will help you draw up a plan with your vet for the practical steps you can take to reduce the risk of disease spreading.
- The plan should include an isolation period for all new stock, and regular sampling procedures for certain diseases, including Avian flu.
- Make sure all your records are accurate and up-to-date to ensure that your produce is fully traceable.
- If you have staff, give them the information and training they need to maintain strict standards of hygiene and biosecurity at all times. If they are allowed to keep their own birds at home, they will need to be extra vigilant for signs of disease and even more careful about biosecurity both at home and on your farm.

How to Stop Disease – Keep Your Farm Clean!

- Don't bring infection onto your farm, or spread it around your farm, on your clothes, footwear or hands. Clean overalls and footwear must be worn when entering poultry farms. Protective clothing and footwear should be removed and either cleansed and disinfected, laundered or disposed of after use.

- Strictly limit and control access to poultry flocks. If possible the site should be fenced with a controlled entry point. Visitors and their vehicles should be limited and as far as possible kept away from poultry buildings and pastures
- Have pressure washers, brushes, hoses, water and an approved disinfectant available. Make sure they are used by visitors to clean vehicles, equipment and boots
- Keep farm access routes, parking areas, yards, areas around buildings and storage areas clean and tidy and well maintained. This helps avoid wild birds and animals being attracted onto the site and entering buildings and stores
- Wild birds can carry poultry diseases. Minimise contact between poultry and wild birds. Prevent accumulation of standing water and remove spilled feed that could attract wild birds. Maintain buildings to ensure that wild birds do not nest or roost in them
- Keep wild birds, dogs, cats, rodents or other livestock out of poultry buildings and feed stores
- Have an active rodent and pest control system in place. Be vigilant for evidence of vermin. Monitor vermin activity by baiting and trapping
- Supply only clean fresh drinking water to birds. Water lines and drinkers must be flushed through and cleaned regularly. In the case of free-range birds restrict access to possible sources of standing water used by wild birds
- Feed bins, hoppers and feeding equipment must be cleaned and maintained regularly. Feed silos and containers must be sealed to prevent animals and wild birds contaminating feed
- Feed should only be obtained from a mill or supplier that operates in accordance with relevant Codes of Practice who will make available results of salmonella tests on request
- Damaged eggs, dead birds, litter and manure may carry disease. Dispose of them promptly and properly
- Clean and disinfect all vehicles after each journey. If possible, do not use the same vehicles for transporting birds, feed, manure or other wastes

- Regularly clean and disinfect all crates, containers and other equipment before and after use. Do not move any equipment into different poultry buildings without cleaning and disinfecting it first. This also applies to injecting and dosing equipment
- At depopulation at the end of a cycle, thoroughly clean the building and all equipment, including ducting, drains and fans. Remove all surplus feed, dead birds and litter. Disinfect the premises and all equipment and carry out rodent and other pest control. Cleaning equipment and protective clothing should also be cleaned and disinfected

Buying New Stock -

Always know the health status of birds you are buying or moving!

- Incoming stock should be kept properly isolated from the rest of the flock - discuss with your vet and agree a testing and monitoring programme
- Only place new stock in facilities which you know have been cleaned and disinfected
- Use separate equipment and staff or handle isolated stock last. Never re-enter your main flock buildings after dealing with isolated stock until you have washed and changed into cleaned overalls and boots
- Keep isolation buildings as near as possible to the farm entrance and as separate from other poultry buildings. Ensure buildings are in good repair and effectively prevent vermin from getting in and spreading any diseases

Free Range Flocks

In addition to the measures outlined above –

- You should feed and water free range birds indoors where possible to reduce mixing between your birds and wild birds.
- If you farm free-range birds you should plan how you will manage them if there is a need to isolate them from wild birds.
- Avoid access to waterways;

- Restrict access of poultry from possible sources of standing water used by wild birds.

Human Health

Please refer to the DHSSPS website at:
www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/phealth/pandemic.asp for information and guidance.

Further information is available on the Health Protection Agency website at: www.hpa.org.uk/infections/topics_az/avianinfluenza/menu.htm

Be Vigilant!

- **Look out for signs of disease in your flock**
- **Increased mortality, falling egg production and signs of respiratory problems may be early indicators of a disease problem**
- **If you suspect disease, ask your vet for advice as soon as possible. Do not wait for more evidence - some diseases can spread very quickly!**
- **Avian influenza and Newcastle Disease are notifiable diseases. You must tell the Divisional Veterinary Office (DVO) immediately if you suspect these diseases.**

Taking care of your birds

The welfare of your birds is always an important concern, and particularly so in the case of a disease outbreak. Movement restrictions can have a negative impact on poultry, with confinement potentially leading to health and behavioural problems. Having a contingency plan in place will make sure the welfare of your flock remains a priority at a critical time.

For guidance and information on poultry welfare, contact your local Divisional Veterinary Office

Protect your flock! Protect your industry!

Always practice good biosecurity, ask your vet for advice if you suspect disease and report any suspicions of Avian influenza or Newcastle Disease to your DARD Divisional Veterinary Office without delay.