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Finlay Carson
Convenor
Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment
Committee

By email -
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31 May 2022

Dear Finlay,

I am writing again to update you on the ongoing avian influenza cases we are seeing in the UK. An outbreak of highly pathogenic influenza (HPAI) H5N1 was confirmed by the Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer for Scotland today and involved a small commercial, free-range laying flock of chickens and ducks on the Island of Whalsay, Shetland Islands.

As a result, the Scottish Government activated its contingency plans to control and eradicate the disease. A veterinary investigation is being carried out to establish the source and the potential spread of the disease. All of the birds on the premises are being humanely euthanised and the owner of the premises is receiving support and guidance from Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) officials.

Scottish Ministers have implemented a 3 km Protection Zone (PZ) and a 10 km Surveillance Zone (SZ) in accordance with the Avian Influenza and Influenza of Avian Origin in Mammals (Scotland) Order 2006. This [Declaration](#) took effect today at 13:25.

This is the tenth outbreak of HPAI H5N1 in Scotland within the 2021/2022 avian influenza outbreak season. The previous premises were: near Arbroath, Angus; two cases near Gretna, Dumfriesshire; near Annan, Dumfriesshire; near Moffat, Dumfriesshire; near Inverurie, Aberdeenshire; near Beith, North Ayrshire; near Collieston, Aberdeenshire; and near Strichen, Aberdeenshire.

Since 27 October 2021, there have been 120 confirmed infected premises within the UK: ten in Scotland, five in Wales, six in Northern Ireland and 99 in England. As of 30 May, there have also been 1,081 wild bird findings of HPAI H5N1, with 359 of these (in 22 bird species) in Scotland.

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

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In response to the initial outbreaks of HPAI H5N1, the Chief Veterinary Officers from Scotland, England and Wales declared an [Avian Influenza Prevention Zone](#) (AIPZ) across the whole of Great Britain on 3 November 2021, which has been amended since, to mitigate the risk of the disease spreading amongst poultry and captive birds.

The risk to the general public's health from avian influenza is very low. However, the risk to people with intensive exposure to infected birds is considered to be low. Food Standards Scotland advises that avian influenzas pose a very low food safety risk for consumers, and it does not affect the consumption of poultry products, including eggs.

Any suspicion of a notifiable disease, such as avian influenza, should be reported immediately, by phone, to the [local APHA field office](#).

However, if a single dead wild waterfowl (swans, geese or duck), a single dead bird of prey, or five or more dead wild birds of any other species (including gulls) are found at the same place at the same time, they should be reported to Defra's GB telephone helpline: 03459 33 55 77. It is advisable that these birds are not touched.

You will also want to know that in Great Britain, anyone that keeps poultry or other captive birds is legally required to register their birds on the GB Poultry Register if they keep more than 50 birds. Keepers with less than 50 birds are strongly encouraged to register. It is also a legal requirement to notify APHA of any significant changes in the average number of birds kept. Further information can be found www.gov.scot/avianinfluenza.

Needless to say, should you have any questions, my officials will be able to answer these. In the first instance, you should contact Jesus Gallego, Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer Scotland, via email at Jesus.Gallego@gov.scot.

Yours sincerely,



MAIRI GOUGEON