

## **What is avian influenza (bird flu)?**

Avian Influenza, commonly referred to as bird flu, is a contagious viral infection that primarily affects birds, including chickens, ducks, and wild birds. Human infections with avian influenza are rare. However, some types of the virus, such as H5N1 or H7N9, have been associated with human disease.

The virus can occasionally spread to humans, leading to severe health concerns. In Northern Ireland, UK, guidance on Avian Influenza is provided by the Department of Agriculture, Environment, and Rural Affairs ([DAERA](#)).

## **Symptoms:**

The symptoms of avian influenza in humans vary depending on the strain or subtype of the virus involved. Most infections take the form of a flu-like illness (fever, cough, body or muscle pain, sore throat, runny nose). Other symptoms can include conjunctivitis (red, sore and discharging eyes).

## **If the dead animal tests positive for avian influenza:**

If the dead animal tests positive for Avian Influenza and you have previously reported direct contact with the animal you will be contacted by the PHA Health Protection Team who will check these details with you as part of a risk assessment, and provide any relevant health advice. In some circumstances, you may be offered antiviral medicines.

## **[Information for the public](#)**

## **Advice for the public:**

In Northern Ireland, guidance on avian influenza is provided by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA). The Public Health Agency will work with DAERA when managing incidents of avian influenza.

- For the latest Northern Ireland situation please visit: [Latest Situation | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs \(daera-ni.gov.uk\)](https://daera-ni.gov.uk)
- For the latest guidance on wild birds and advice visit: [Wild Birds and Advice for the Public | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs \(daera-ni.gov.uk\)](https://daera-ni.gov.uk)
- To report a dead wild bird please use the DAERA online form: [Report dead wild birds - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- Further information on avian influenza (bird flu) including symptoms, diagnosis, management and epidemiology is available through:
  - [Avian influenza: guidance, data and analysis - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
  - [Bird flu - NHS](https://www.nhs.uk)
  - [Bird flu \(avian influenza\): latest situation in England - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

This guidance outlines measures to prevent the spread of the virus, such as biosecurity measures for poultry keepers, monitoring and reporting any signs of infection in birds, and restrictions on the movement of poultry to prevent further transmission. It is crucial for both poultry keepers and the public to stay informed and follow these guidelines to protect both bird populations and public health.

If you have found a dead animal it is important that you follow the below routine precautions to prevent any risks to your health:

- do not pick up or touch sick, dying or dead poultry, wild birds or wild animals, and keep pets away from them;
- avoid contact with surfaces contaminated with bird faeces;
- avoid untreated bird feathers (such as those found in the environment) and other bird waste; and,
- maintain good personal hygiene with regular hand washing with soap and use of alcohol-based hand rubs.

## **Treatment**

There is currently no approved vaccine for the bird flu virus (avian influenza) that is available for widespread public use.

[Avian influenza \(bird flu\) vaccination - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

[Guidance for the management of people exposed to birds or other animals infected with influenza A\(H5\) - GOV.UK](#)

## **Guidance for health professionals**

- [Working with highly pathogenic avian influenza virus - HSE](#)
- [Zoonoses \(infections acquired from animals\) | HSC Public Health Agency](#)

## **Data and surveillance**

- Further information on avian influenza (bird flu) including symptoms, diagnosis, management and epidemiology is available through following PHE website <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/avian-influenza-guidance-data-and-analysis>
- The latest laboratory confirmed cases of zoonotic disease in humans in Northern Ireland can be viewed at [NI Zoonoses website data.xlsx](#)
- England and Wales epidemiological data can be viewed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/zoonotic-diseases-zoonoses-guidance-data-and-analysis>

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