

New rules for poultry and captive bird keepers to contain avian flu outbreak

Captive bird and poultry keepers will be legally required to keep their birds indoors under new measures to control the spread of avian flu. It comes after a number of confirmed cases of the H5N1 strain of the virus in recent weeks, including a case in the Arun area.

The new legal requirement is for all UK bird keepers to keep their birds indoors **from Monday 29 November** in a bid to minimise contact with wild birds migrating from mainland Europe.

Enhanced biosecurity measures are also being introduced – including regular cleaning and disinfecting and reducing the number of visitors coming into contact with birds.

Peter Aston, West Sussex Trading Standards Team Manager, said: “The consequences of avian flu spreading to domestic birds and poultry in West Sussex would be severe. All owners need to follow the new rules and additional guidance to ensure their birds avoid catching the disease.

“Poultry owners should also watch out for signs that their birds have been infected. The main symptoms of avian flu include a swollen head, blue discolouration of the neck and throat, loss of appetite, diarrhoea and respiratory distress.”

Duncan Crow, West Sussex County Council Cabinet Member for Community Support, Fire and Rescue, said: “I urge all bird and poultry keepers to do all they can to ensure we prevent the spread of avian flu to domestic birds in West Sussex.”

Poultry and captive bird keepers are reminded to do the following:

- House or net all poultry and captive birds to keep them separate from wild birds;
- Cleanse and disinfect clothing, footwear, housing, equipment and vehicles on a regular basis;
- Reduce the movement of people, vehicles or equipment in areas where poultry and captive birds are kept to minimise contamination;
- Thoroughly cleanse and disinfect housing on a continuous basis; and
- Minimise direct and indirect contact between poultry and captive birds and wild birds, including making sure all feed and water is not accessible to wild birds

Avian flu is a disease which mainly affects birds but in very rare cases it can spread to people and other mammals. Do not touch or pick up any dead or sick birds that you find. Report them to the Defra helpline on 03459 33 55 77.

Bird keepers should report suspicion of disease to the Defra Rural Services Helpline on 03000 200 301.

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