

Avian Influenza Prevention Zone — Additional Information for Royal Pigeon Racing Association

Current Situation

- The UK does not currently have any cases of avian influenza.
- The Prevention Zone is a precautionary measure to encourage poultry and captive bird keepers to improve their biosecurity. Further information on the declaration and avian influenza is available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/avian-influenza-bird-flu>

About the Avian Influenza virus

Avian Influenza can spread from wild birds to your own birds by:

- Direct contact between infected wild birds and your own birds
- Contaminated faeces or body fluids coming into contact with your own birds.
- Pigeons can catch avian influenza as any bird can, but they play less of a role in the transmission of disease to poultry
- Avian Influenza symptoms in pigeons are similar to those in poultry and include:
 - swollen head
 - discolouration of neck and throat
 - loss of appetite
 - respiratory distress such as gaping beak, coughing, sneezing, gurgling, rattling
 - diarrhoea
 - neurological signs such as shivering
 - fewer eggs laid
 - increased deaths

How you can reduce the risk to your pigeons

To reduce the risk of your birds becoming infected with Avian Influenza, you should take steps to avoid your birds coming in to contact with wild birds, or their faeces/body fluids

- The Avian Influenza Prevention Zone conditions apply to all captive birds. However, we are aware that racing and show pigeons are already fed indoors using commercial feeds and housed indoors with little or no access for other wild birds
- You should focus on ensuring a high level of biosecurity in your lofts, particularly if you also keep poultry — chickens, hens, ducks, geese, turkeys, and guinea fowl and should follow the advice, where practical, in the biosecurity advice document on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).
- We recognise it is currently the closed season for racing pigeons and racing is not scheduled to begin again until April.
- **You can still fly your pigeons for exercise.**
- You should, where practicable, undertake vermin (rats and mice) control to reduce their contact with feed and water for pigeons
- Your birds should, where practicable, receive mains or treated water that is not accessible to wild birds or poultry to reduce the risk of contamination.

- You should also ensure your baskets are as clean as practicable when you are using them to transport birds to other locations (other lofts, shows, sales, etc).
- You may wish to clean your bird's feet before transporting them to other locations
- If you also keep poultry, ensure that your pigeons do not mix with any poultry or have access to poultry's food and water

Shows & gatherings: there is no ban or restriction on shows or gatherings of pigeons at present. However, organisers may want to consider rescheduling them, given the heightened risk of Avian Influenza circulating in wild birds. If you have any specific concerns you should discuss these with your private vet or local APHA office.

There is a General Licence that allows shows and gatherings of birds to occur. You don't need to apply for a licence but you must comply with the terms of the General Licence.

You must tell **APHA** you're having an event (show/sale/racing) at least 7 days before a bird gathering. APHA will tell the local authority about the gathering and you should keep records for 3 months. You'll need to give APHA the following details:

- Date(s) on which there will be birds at the gathering
- place at which it will be held (address and postcode)
- your name, address and contact number, and an email address and mobile number if you have them
- purpose of the gathering (show, sale, racing, etc)
- types and numbers of birds expected

Further information on ways to reduce disease spread at gatherings is available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/bird-gatherings-licences> and APHA contact details are below

APHA England: customeradviceapha.gsi.gov.uk 03000 200 301 (select option 'other')

APHA Scotland Inverness Office: APHA.Scotlandapha.gsi.gov.uk 01463 728800

APHA Wales. Caernarfon Office. APHA.CymruWales@apha.gsi.gov.uk 0300 303 8268