

Avian influenza and other notifiable diseases at a bird gathering: what to expect

This guidance details the practical steps and legal requirements that must be taken by bird gathering organisers (the licensee) and attendees if there is a suspicion or confirmation of avian influenza or another notifiable avian disease at a gathering. Also detailed are actions likely to be taken by the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA).

What to do if you suspect notifiable disease

Obligation to report: a [notifiable disease](#) is a disease that you must report to APHA by law, even if you only suspect an animal may be affected. If you suspect a notifiable disease in your animals you must report it:

- In England, call 03000 200 301
- In Wales, call 0300 303 8268
- In Scotland, contact your local [Field Services Office](#)

Failure to report your suspicions is against the law.

Notifiable avian diseases and identifying signs: see [gov.uk](#) guidance for [avian influenza](#), [Newcastle disease](#) and [pigeon paramyxovirus](#).

Bird keepers: as soon as you suspect your birds have notifiable disease you should not move any birds, equipment, vehicles, or other things liable to transmit disease to or from the premises. You should not leave the premises yourself until otherwise instructed by APHA.

Initial actions: any birds suspected of disease should be isolated from other birds. The organiser of the gathering should have a dedicated space for this.

What happens when you report suspicion of notifiable disease

See full [gov.uk guidance](#) for what happens when you report notifiable animal disease.

When you call, you will speak to a duty vet from the APHA; they will ask you for:

- A clear description of the signs of disease and when signs were first observed
- The species, breed and age of the birds, and how many birds are affected
- Details of the origin premises of the birds, including CPH number
- Where the birds have recently been
- Whether vehicles used to transport the birds remain on site
- Details of the event: name and location of the gathering, number of birds present, species involved
- Whether any birds have arrived or left the gathering since signs were first noticed
- Whether any other birds at the gathering are showing signs of disease
- Biosecurity measures, including isolation of birds and if cleansing and disinfection (C&D) is being implemented
- Contact details for the licensee and the keeper

Having this information available will help APHA assess the situation quickly to determine the level of disease suspicion, and, if necessary, initiate tracing and disease control measures. If APHA need to attend, the APHA duty vet will give an expected time for their arrival.

If APHA staff need to visit the gathering, a visit may also be required to the origin premises of the affected birds. The keeper would be asked to make arrangements to support this. APHA may ask for records of other keepers or visitors attending the gathering, and their addresses/contact details.

The APHA duty vet will give instructions on the phone of what restrictions must be complied with. It is requested that everyone at the gathering abides by these restrictions to prevent onward disease spread. There may be other requests to help to get ready for the visit or to gather information prior to the visit.

When the APHA vet arrives:

- They will serve a notice which will place restrictions on the premises. They will describe the restrictions and ensure everyone understands what this means.
- They will inspect the birds for clinical signs of disease.
- If they cannot rule out notifiable disease, they will take samples for testing.
- Once the notice has been served, no people, birds, equipment, vehicles or other things liable to transmit disease may move off or onto the premises unless licensed by APHA.

After the visit:

- If APHA can rule out notifiable disease following clinical inspection, restrictions will be lifted.
- If samples were taken, the premises will remain under restrictions.
- APHA staff will work to license movements off the premises for people and vehicles that need to leave whilst restrictions are in place.
- Birds will need to be housed on site, and their welfare needs met until test results are ready. Initial results will usually be reported within 2 days (often earlier), but full testing can take up to 6 days. Depending on initial results APHA may be able to license movement of birds off the premises into isolation.

Licensee responsibilities:

Contingency plan: you must have a [contingency plan](#) in place. Use this to help guide your actions.

Communication: you should inform participants of the situation, any restrictions and required actions.

Record keeping: you are required by your licence to keep records of:

- All people who bring birds to the gathering
- All people who take birds from the gathering

You must provide these to APHA if requested; they will be used for disease tracing purposes.

Bird keeper responsibilities:

Reasonable assistance: you should provide all reasonable assistance to the APHA vet when they are inspecting your birds, including presenting them for inspection and restraining birds for sampling if necessary. APHA understand this can be challenging for keepers and will support them.

Tracing: you should provide requested information to assist with efforts to trace routes of disease transmission. Effective tracing by APHA minimises the impact of disease to the wider community.

If you leave the gathering before APHA attend and legally serve notice of restrictions, you risk spreading disease back to your premises or destination, including any other birds present.

Any birds and people who have left the premises and may be at risk will be traced and potentially visited by APHA. If disease is confirmed on your premises or destination, disease control measures such as culling of infected birds, and cleansing and disinfection (C&D) will be required.

Once a notice has been formally served, you may only leave or enter the premises where the gathering is held if licensed to do so by APHA. If you leave without being licensed or instructed by APHA, you may be committing an offence under Section 73 of the Animal Health Act 1981.

