



British Egg Industry Council

24th December 2021

IMPORTANT – Avian Influenza and Biosecurity

(A reminder from Ian Lowery, BVetMed PGCert ILHP MRCVS, BEIC Veterinary Consultant)

With the unprecedented level of Avian Influenza virus which is affecting commercial flocks, captive birds and back-yard flocks, ensuring the highest levels of biosecurity has never been so important throughout the chain.

Complacency is a very significant risk to your business right now!

Just because you have never had Avian Influenza before does not mean that you won't get it tomorrow. AI has no respect for business size or type of production system.

Just because you have "always done things this way" does not mean your standards of biosecurity are good enough. This virus finds the weakest link.

We are dealing with a threat in the form of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza which has demonstrated its ability to infect housed birds, spread between units and cause catastrophic levels of mortality.

Anyone failing to redouble their efforts to keep this virus out of poultry units is taking a very dangerous, ill-informed and hugely costly gamble. A gamble which has no upside; the cost of effectively applied good quality biosecurity will always offer a cost benefit in terms of day-to-day control of diseases, not to mention boosting your protection against very costly diseases such as HPAI and Salmonella.

With a huge number of wild bird cases and the sky full of migrating waterfowl it would be safe to assume that the virus is already on your premises, on the roofs of poultry houses, on the range and on yards (whether muddy or concrete). **THE VIRUS IS ON YOUR FARM(S) AND IS CONSTANTLY CHALLENGING YOUR BIOSECURITY. IT IS WAITING FOR A CHANCE TO INFECT YOUR FLOCK(S).**

So, what should you do?

1. **CONSIDER IN DETAIL** about how your farm works – movements of vehicles (egg lorries, muck trailers, feed deliveries), equipment (maintenance tools, trailers) and staff (egg collectors, maintenance staff, muck haulage). Critically assess each of these activities and review whether there are robust procedures so that access to the site, the service area and the bird area is made as safe as possible.
2. **WATCH** your staff and contractors entering the site, moving around the site, and entering the house. Are they following your rules? Are wheel washers being used? Are vehicles clean? Do procedures need improving? Do staff need educating/reminding?
3. **REMINDE** your staff – Explain the danger and the risk and explain the consequences of a failure of biosecurity - spend time to train and reinforce. Ensure that **Everyone** is aware of his/her responsibilities and are able to navigate the biosecurity barrier properly.

4. **BARRIERS** should prevent muck or dirt from the outside being moved inside and vice versa. Properly used, barriers require staff to remove outside shoes on the outside of the barrier and put on dedicated inside footwear on the other side of the barrier. Use of plastic overboots at barrier points is NOT recommended. Plastic overboots tear after a few steps and allow the muck from outside to be introduced into the bird environment.
5. **DOUBLE BARRIERS** are better than a single barrier. A step-over barrier at the entrance of the service area, with dedicated service area footwear (e.g. crocs/clogs) and a second step-over barrier at the entrance to the bird accommodation area (e.g. coloured wellies) will significantly reduce the chance of introduction of disease. Anyone caught wearing the wrong shoes in the wrong area should be instantly identifiable and reprimanded.
6. **MAINTENANCE** – Ensure the roof of the poultry house does not have holes, ensure that back doors are watertight and sealed, ensure guttering works, ensure that outside concrete aprons are kept washed and disinfected. The fabric of the building **MUST** prevent wild bird access and **MUST** not allow weather conditions to wash in an infectious viral cocktail.
7. **MULTI-TIER systems** – you are urged to take additional measures to control the risk of walking virus in from the muck cross-belt area, often located after the barrier biosecurity but before the entrance to the bird accommodation area at the front of the house. Additional footdips, or footwear changes, are strongly recommended in this area as the cross-muck belt can allow wild bird faeces to be introduced into this area. Management of regular muck collection and the additional vehicle movements associated with muck collection from multi-tier units also require additional controls.

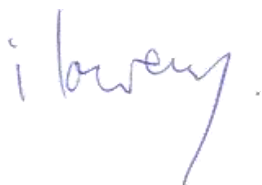
Please, please, heed this warning. Do not be complacent. Act now to safeguard your business and the wider industry against further spread of this devastating disease.

Included in this circular is the recording (available to [view here](#)) of the presentation made by Andy Paterson BVetMed, PhD, DipECVPH, MRCVS (Head of Intervention Epidemiology (GB) & Head of the National Emergency Epidemiology Group, APHA) on “*Common risk factors identified from the 2020/21 AI outbreak: Things that you should focus on to reduce the likelihood of introduction and to limit the impact on your business*”, at the joint poultry industry/government workshop on 13th December 2021.

It is well worth listening to as it provides examples of what went wrong during the 2020/21 ‘AI season’ and more importantly gives advice on how to prevent the same thing happening – i.e. it delivers sound practical advice.

Furthermore, a copy of Andy’s PDF presentation is available to view at the following link: [Common risk factors identified from the 2020/21 AI outbreak: Things that you should focus on to reduce the likelihood of introduction and to limit the impact on your business](#)

Kind regards.



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