

Avian Influenza in the Wild Bird Population in Huntingdonshire

Dear Councillors

It is with regret that I share that we have had notification from The Animal and Plant Health Agency of confirmed avian influenza in the wild bird population in Huntingdonshire. This was first confirmed on 10th August and we have since sought advice and support from the Director of Public Health, UK Health Security Agency and the Animal & Plant Health Agency. This, unfortunately, means that the bird population in Huntingdonshire is now impacted by this disease. DEFRA have advised the Council that the disease can take 2-3 weeks to pass through a bird population. The risk to public health is **very low**.

What We Need to Do

- HDC has been advised that we may decide to take measures to inform the public at the location of sensible measures to take to avoid any spread or transference.
- It is our responsibility to dispose of carcasses on our own land, other land owners must make their own arrangements.

We have:

- Discussed an action plan with the Director of Public Health, Senior Leadership Team, communications representatives from the UK Health Security Agency, and Animal & Plant Health Agency
- Produced a guidance notice (attached) for all HDC riverside sites to advice of the sensible precautions regarding avoiding dead or injured birds, any bird droppings and keep dogs on leads. A blank version of this will be made available for Town and Parish use.
- Made hand sanitiser available on the routes into our parks from car parks to support good hygiene.
- Made specific arrangements with pet crematoria for disposal by incineration of dead carcasses on public or HDC land, HDC operations are trained and equipped to safely collect and transfer carcasses. (It is a private landowners responsibility to make their own arrangements).
- Set up arrangements for enquiry handling via the Council's main number 01480 388640
- Set up a specific web page with guidance from the NHS, Gov.uk and UK Health Security Agency. This can be found at www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/birdflu .
- Developed social media to alert the population.
- Set up a communications cascade to extend this information to our partners and stakeholders.

General Information Bird Influenza:

- Wild birds are susceptible to a range of diseases and injuries and not all dead birds will have been infected with avian influenza. However the advice is not to touch or pick up any dead or visibly sick birds that you find.
- The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has said that avian influenza is primarily a disease of birds and the risk to the general public's health is very low. If the virus was transmitted to humans the most likely route would be by breathing in dust and mist generated by infected birds and by **not** washing hands after handling infected birds or contaminated equipment and clothing. The Health and Safety Executive have issued advice and guidance on their website [Avian influenza virus \(hse.gov.uk\)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/avian-influenza-virus)
- We have been requested to alert neighbouring public authorities and site operators and consider taking measures to inform the public at the location of sensible biosecurity to take place.

Advice (this is headline information only, detail and links are available on our website):

If you have found a dead bird:

- If you find dead wild waterfowl (swans, geese or ducks) or other dead wild birds, such as gulls or birds of prey on HDC or public land, you should report them to the Huntingdonshire District Council Customer Service team on **01480 388640** for safe removal and disposal. Do not touch the bird.

If you have found a sick or injured bird:

- If you are concerned about sick or injured wildfowl in the Huntingdonshire area, you may contact the **RSPCA on 0300 1234 999**. Do not touch the bird.

If you have found and touched a sick or dead bird:

- Anyone who has been in contact with a sick or dead wild birds or their droppings, should practice good hygiene and [follow NHS recommendations](#) and thoroughly wash their hands in soap and water.
- Call a GP or NHS 111 if you experience any [symptoms of bird flu](#) and have visited an area affected by bird flu in the past 10 days. Your symptoms can be checked over the phone.

We would ask that all enquires for information/action are directed to our website www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/birdflu or Customer Services 01480 388640 so they can be dealt with effectively.