



Our Ref: 2017/57179N

Ms. Nicola Radley,  
Senior Executive Officer,  
Cork County Council,  
County Hall,  
Cork.



16 March 2017

Dear Ms. Radley,

I am writing to you in relation to your recent correspondence on behalf of Cork County Council concerning matters relating to avian influenza.

The H5N8 strain of avian influenza has been responsible for over 600 outbreaks of disease in poultry and in excess of 430 mortality events in wild birds in Europe since the end of October 2016. It is a highly pathogenic strain of avian influenza which means that it causes severe disease and often death in infected birds. Its spread can be attributed to the movement of wild migratory birds.

Since December 2016 there have been 12 confirmed cases of H5N8 in wild birds in Ireland which I've detailed in the table below. It is now likely to be well established in the wild bird population throughout the country.

| County          | Cases | Species of Wild Bird        |
|-----------------|-------|-----------------------------|
| Wexford         | 1     | Widgeon                     |
| Galway          | 4     | Widgeon and Whooper Swans   |
| Leitrim         | 1     | Whooper Swan                |
| Roscommon       | 1     | Whooper Swan                |
| Tipperary       | 4     | Whooper Swans and Mute Swan |
| Cork (Midleton) | 1     | Grey Heron                  |

On the 23/12/16 this Department announced regulations under the Animal Health and Welfare Act 2013 requiring flock keepers, including large commercial operations and 'back-yard' flocks, to confine all poultry and captive birds in their possession or under their control in a secure building to which wild birds, or other animals do not have access, and to apply specific bio-security measures. This is the first time such action has been taken by this Department. The requirement to keep birds confined was extended on 23/01/17 and again on 08/03/2017. It will remain in place until 30/04/17.

Key stakeholders are regularly updated on the current situation (including Department staff, all sectors of the poultry industry, poultry and general veterinary practitioners, wild bird organisations, public health officials etc.)

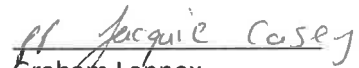
A range of information and advice is provided on the Department's website. Key biosecurity advice has also been published in the national press and staff from the Department have

participated in segments on the topic on local radio and on RTE's Ear to the Ground programme.

An Avian Influenza Helpline has been activated to answer public enquires regarding the disease, and for the reporting of sick or dying birds. The Department has an early warning system for unusual mortalities in wild birds in place with Birdwatch Ireland, National Parks and Wildlife Service, and the National Association of Regional Game Councils.

The Department emphasises the requirement to confine poultry and other birds, and to apply strict bio-security measures to prevent the spread of avian influenza to domestic poultry. Poultry flock owners should remain vigilant for any signs of disease in their flocks, and report any disease suspicion to their nearest Department Veterinary Office.

Yours sincerley,

  
Graham Lennox  
Private Secretary