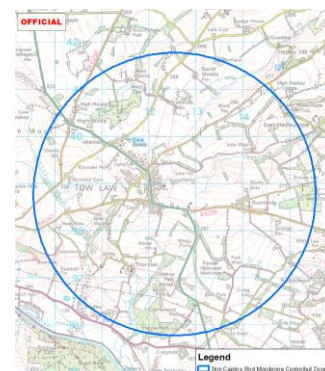# Important Notice: Avian Influenza (Bird Flu) Case near Tow Law, Bishop Auckland

Attention Resident:

A confirmed case of Avian Influenza was confirmed in other captive birds at a premises near Tow Law, Bishop Auckland. The Government has declared:

3km radius Captive Bird (monitoring) controlled zone

The risk to public health from the virus is very low, however it is important that people don't pick up sick or dead birds.

APHA staff will contact known poultry/captive bird owners within the next few days to gather further information. This information will help veterinary staff to assess the risk of avian influenza spread. APHA veterinary staff may need to carry out an inspection of your birds to assess their health.

Please be reassured there is no automatic culling policy for avian influenza outbreaks. Birds will only be culled if Avian Influenza is confirmed in the flock following laboratory testing of samples, or if a veterinary risk assessment indicates a strong likelihood of significant links to an infected premise.

Compulsory registration of poultry and captive birds with APHA has been required since 1st October 2024.

If you keep poultry or captive birds and have not registered, you must do so now using the following link:

Online: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/register-as-a-bird-keeper

Special Measures

If you have poultry or other birds at your premises, you must adhere to the conditions and movement restrictions within the controlled Zone which can be found by using the QR code at the top of this letter. Heightened biosecurity measures have been put in place to protect your birds from disease and prevent its spread. All poultry and captive birds must be housed or kept isolated, and licences are required for movements to and from premises in the zone. Further information on the current avian influenza restrictions and controls which apply in the area can be found on the government website. https://bit.ly/452tMut

Signs of Avian Influenza

If your birds become ill, consult your vet immediately. Avian Influenza spreads through direct contact or contaminated fluids and faeces. Symptoms in poultry include:

- Swollen head and blue discolouration of the neck and throat
- Loss of appetite and diarrhoea
- Respiratory distress (gaping beak, coughing, sneezing, gurgling, rattling)
- Reduced egg production and increased mortality

By law, if you or your vet suspects that kept birds are showing any signs of disease it must be immediately reported to APHA by telephoning 03000 200 301.

Wild Birds

If the birds are wild, no action is required. However, you can assist by reporting dead wild waterfowl (swans, geese, ducks) or other wild birds (gulls, birds of prey) to the Defra helpline at 03459 335577.

Local Authority Response

Please see below confirmation of the measures being taken to raise awareness of the outbreak and attempts to identify unregistered poultry and captive birds within the zone:

- Asked for webpages to be updated 28 July 2025 with updated information on the relevant zones. (awaiting confirmation that this has been done) - [Animal health and welfare - Durham County Council](#)

- Social media post on corporate feeds - including link for reporting unregistered birds. Will update this link once it is live.

- Briefing will be sent to ward members and town/parish councillors and request to display Poster on community notice boards.

- Road signs warning of the disease outbreak will be erected on the main roads into and out of the 3KM zone.

- Signs to be put on the affected site.

- Working with the allotments service and providing advice to all allotment keepers in the Controlled Zone.

- Officers will be out in Tow Law and nearby areas where birds are housed within the Zone putting up "posters". They will engage with members of the public and monitor compliance with housing restrictions, etc. Any birds identified will be checked against the known premises listings, if unregistered they will be followed up.

- Relevant information gathered will be forwarded to the OUTBREAKFOB6.RATATEAM@apha.gov.uk mailbox.