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HPAI Housing Restriction in Ireland to be extended to 30 April

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine today announced that it will extend the confinement period for birds under the *Avian Influenza Precautionary Confinement of Birds Regulations 2016* until 30 April 2017. This extends the requirement to confine/house poultry and other captive birds, which was declared as a precautionary measure against avian influenza (bird flu) on 23 December 2016, and which had been due to expire on 16 March.

This extension is due to the continued findings of HPAI H5N8 in wild birds in Ireland and also as a precautionary measure to protect the internationally recognised high health status of the national poultry flock. The Department will be keeping this decision under regular review.

To date there have been 12 wild birds confirmed positive for Avian Flu in 6 counties since the end of December. There have been no outbreaks in poultry. The H5N8 subtype of avian influenza has also been responsible for a large number of outbreaks of disease in wild birds and poultry in several European countries since the end of October.

The extension of the Housing Notice means that the 12 week derogation period for free-range produce set down under EU law expires on 17th March. After this date, processors, producers and retailers in the free-range egg and poultry sector must make alternative labelling arrangements in order to remain in compliance with the relevant EU provisions on

marketing and labelling of their products. The Department has produced a guidance note on the marketing of free range eggs and poultry meat and this will issue to the sector this afternoon.

The Department would also like to remind those involved in arranging bird gatherings that these take place under a general licence the terms of which place responsibilities on organisers of such events, emphasising in particular the need to provide advance notification to the Department and the application of bio-security measures.

Details on advance notification are available on the Departments website.

http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/avian_influenza/informationonshowsexhibitionsraces/

Although the H5N8 subtype can cause serious disease in poultry and other birds, no human infections with this virus have been reported world-wide and therefore risk to humans is considered to be very low.

Poultry flock owners should remain vigilant for any signs of disease in their flocks, maintain strict biosecurity measures and report any disease suspicion to their nearest Department Veterinary Office.

An early warning system is in place with Birdwatch Ireland, the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the National Association of Regional Game Councils with regard to surveillance for signs of disease in wild birds. The Department continues to closely monitor and assess the disease situation and maintains close contact with our counterparts in DAERA on the matter.

Further information:

Further information on avian influenza can be found here:

http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/avian_influenza/avianinfluenzanews/

A list of Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine offices and their contact details is available at: <http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/contact/>

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