

## Bird flu; what is all the fuss about?

Bird flu arrives in the UK most years, but this year's outbreak has been the largest and longest ever on record in the UK and in many parts of Europe. Infections have continued beyond the normal winter period and are now hitting wild birds and breeding colonies of seabirds that are not typically affected, causing many deaths. A very nasty variant of this bird flu (H5N1) was confirmed on 2 September in commercial poultry at a premises near South Molton. By early September over 1,500 wild birds from 61 different species and in over 360 locations in UK had tested positive. The south west has been declared a prevention zone.

It seems quite difficult for people to catch bird flu from an infected bird or for one infected person to infect another but there is a potential worry that bird flu viruses could change/mutate and gain the ability to spread easily between people. So please avoid catching it if possible:

- **do not touch or pick up** any dead or visibly sick birds that you find
- **report dead wild birds on** the Defra helpline (03459 33 55 77) **if you find**
  - one or more dead bird of prey or owl
  - 3 or more dead gulls or wild waterfowl (swans, geese and ducks)
  - 5 or more dead birds of any species.
- If you keep chickens, you should [register your poultry](#) with DEFRA and comply with minimum biosecurity measures. This is a legal requirement if you have 50 or more birds. Poultry includes chickens, ducks, turkeys, geese, pigeon (bred for meat), partridge, quail, guinea fowl and pheasants.

There is no bird flu vaccine and the seasonal flu vaccine doesn't protect against bird flu. But you can't catch bird flu through eating fully cooked poultry or eggs.

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