

## **COUGHLAN ANNOUNCES NEW MEASURES ON AVIAN INFLUENZA**

The Minister for Agriculture and Food, Mary Coughlan TD, today announced a number of initiatives in what she described as “a measured response” to the recent confirmation of an outbreak of avian influenza in Turkey, a development which she described as “very worrying”.

Minister Coughlan welcomed the EU ban on all imports of live birds and untreated feathers from Turkey and noted that imports of live poultry, eggs and fresh poultry meat from that country were already banned.

The Minister said that, following the confirmation of the outbreak, her Department had immediately reassessed the risk of the introduction of the disease into this country and, as a result, had initiated a series of measures as an appropriate additional response to the new level of risk. The Minister stressed that her Department's state of readiness would at all times be risk assessment-based. She added that her Department would continue to maintain a very vigilant approach to the threat of the disease and she wouldn't hesitate to introduce such measures as were considered appropriate to deal with the threat at any given time.

The Minister said that, based on the current assessment of risk, she had instructed her officials to request the assistance of Customs & Excise officers to provide further support for her Department's efforts at border inspection posts and she had arranged for the deployment of additional Departmental resources at Dublin airport.

Furthermore, the Minister said: “My Department has recently issued detailed information to poultry flockowners on measures to reduce the risk of the introduction of avian influenza into Ireland and, tomorrow, we will publish updated advice for travellers to/from countries affected countries.” She also pointed out that updated biosecurity advice for poultry flockowners as well as information on the symptoms of exotic poultry diseases were also available on the Department's website and had been circulated to the poultry industry.

Minister Coughlan also said that officials from her Department had, last week, met with colleagues from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland, for the second time in a month. This, the Minister said, was “concrete evidence of a commitment by both Departments to continue to work closely together in relation to an issue which is of such obvious mutual interest”.

In light of the current risk assessment, the Minister said that she was finalising an Order which would require the maintenance, by poultry flockowners, of records of poultry mortalities, egg production and food and water intake as well as the reporting of such details to the Department. The Minister described this as an entirely appropriate measure in the current circumstances.

The Minister also confirmed that the issue of requiring free-range poultry to be housed had again been considered and she said that it was her considered view that such a step was, at this time, “not proportionate to the risk of the introduction of the disease”.

Minister Coughlan concluded by repeating her assertion that “in relation to avian influenza, there is no room for complacency”. She said that her Department would continue its vigilant approach and would, in the light of all new information, continue to reassess the level of risk of the disease being introduced into Ireland. The Minister said that she would continue to introduce such measures as she considered appropriate in the light of the risk at any give time.

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