

MINISTER COUGHLAN REASSURES ON AVIAN 'FLU

Responding to confirmation of outbreaks of the H5N1 avian 'flu virus in Greece, Italy and Slovenia, the Minister for Agriculture and Food, Mary Coughlan T.D., today said that the recent developments were a matter of concern. The Minister said that her Department's assessment was that while the further spread of the virus had obviously increased the risk to Ireland somewhat, the risk still remains low.

Minister Coughlan emphasised the need for continued vigilance and said that her Department was keeping its contingency arrangements under review. While the Department will continue to do what it can to prevent the introduction of the virus into the country, it was important also that poultry flock owners followed the biosecurity advice issued by the Department and that those travelling to affected countries took sensible precautions.

The Minister said that her Department had put together a comprehensive [Information Booklet for Registered Poultry Flockowners](#), with advice on biosecurity, the housing of poultry, advice for employers as well as cleaning and disinfections.

Minister Coughlan also thanked the thousands of flock owners who had registered with the Department and appealed to those who had yet to register to do so 'as a matter of urgency'. The Minister said that the register would be a 'a vital tool of the Department in dealing with any outbreak of the disease.'

Finally, the Minister reiterated the need for continued vigilance and repeated her Department's assessment that, notwithstanding the events of the past week, the risk to Ireland posed by the spread of the H5N1 virus 'though increased, was still low'.

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