

#### **MINISTER COUGHLAN ANNOUNCES ADDITIONAL AVIAN INFLUENZA MEASURES**

**The Minister for Agriculture and Food, Mary Coughlan TD, today said that a range of measures are already in place here to deal with avian influenza and these, and all aspects of the contingency plan are kept under active review. However, she added that the recent spread of the virus to wild birds in Europe was of concern as it increased the risk of its introduction here. In view of the increased risk, the Minister announced the establishment of an Expert Group to provide ongoing advice in relation to avian influenza control measures.**

**The Group includes veterinary, scientific and ornithological expertise from within and outside the Department and will be chaired by Professor Michael Monaghan of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicines at UCD. Professor Monaghan fulfilled a similar role at the time of Foot & Mouth Disease in 2001. The membership of the Group is as follows:**

**Ø Professor Michael Monaghan, Faculty of Veterinary Medicines, UCD (Chairman)**

**Ø Olivia Crowe, Birdwatch Ireland**

**Ø Dr Michael Gunn, CVRL, Department of Agriculture & Food**

**Ø Professor Bill Hall, Director, Centre for Research in Infectious Diseases, UCD**

**Ø PJ McArdle, Poultry Expert (ex-Department of Agriculture and Food)**

**Ø Donal McLoone, MRCVS**

**Ø Dr Patrick Wall, Professor of Public Health, School of Public Health and Population Science, UCD**

**Ø Dr Paddy Rogan, Chief Veterinary Officer, Department of Agriculture & Food**

**Ø Dermot A Ryan, Senior Inspector, Department of Agriculture and Food**

**Ø John Wilson, Parks and Wildlife Service**

**Minister Coughlan thanked those who had agreed to serve on the Expert Group. She said that “it is important, given the potential consequences of an outbreak of avian 'flu, that my Department and I have access to the most comprehensive advice available to us on an ongoing basis. The members of the Group will bring a wealth of advice and experience that will be of great value in ensuring that all reasonable precautions are taken to prevent the introduction of the disease and if necessary to deal with outbreaks if they arise.”**

**The Minister said she would be asking the Expert Group to advise her of the circumstances in which it would be appropriate to require the compulsory housing of domestic poultry and other birds. Such a measure is provided for in EU legislation where the risk to poultry was considered to be high.**

**In the meantime, Minister Coughlan urged owners to follow the biosecurity advice they had already received from her Department. Moreover she advised that they should also plan now for the eventuality that compulsory housing will become necessary sooner or later.**

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