

#### EXPERT ADVISORY GROUP CONSIDERS LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

The Minister for Agriculture and Food, Ms Mary Coughlan TD, confirmed that based on her Department's risk analysis and the opinion expressed today by the Expert Group, that she would not be introducing any further control measures at this time. However, she and her Department would be monitoring the developing situation very carefully and she would not hesitate to introduce any additional measures with immediate effect where this was considered appropriate.

The Avian Influenza Expert Advisory, established by the Minister, under the chairmanship of Professor Michael Monaghan of UCD, met today in Dublin to consider the latest developments following confirmation of a case on HPA1 H5N1 in a swan on the east coast of Scotland.

As on previous occasions, the Group reviewed the range of measures in place and the nature of the biosecurity advice offered by the Department to registered poultry flockowners. In addition, the Group considered the conclusions of the risk assessment undertaken by the Department yesterday in association with the National Parks and Wildlife Service, BirdWatch Ireland and the Centre for Veterinary Epidemiology and Risk Analysis (CVERA) in UCD as well as the preliminary statement from the Animal Health and Welfare panel of the European Safety Authority.

The Expert Group endorsed the conclusions of the Department's risk analysis that the developments in Scotland represented a marginal increase in the risk to Ireland, based on the information currently available. While the Group agreed that existing control measures are appropriate at this stage and again concluded that the point had not been reached at which the compulsory housing of free-range and organic poultry was required, they did reiterate the advice to flockowners to be prepared to house all poultry in the event of an incident and reinforced the need to use only treated water from surface water reservoirs to ensure that any viruses are inactivated. The Group also encouraged increased vigilance among flockowners and emphasised the importance of the Department avian 'flu Helpline - 1890 252 283

The Group also noted new advice which the Department has issued to registered poultry flockowners as to the likely implications for them of a case of avian 'flu in wild birds and/or in poultry.

The Group also endorsed the Department's approach to the increasing threat which it described as 'proportionate and consistent' and advised that the Department maintain that approach, particularly in light of the most recent developments.

The Group was also updated on ongoing contacts between the Department and colleagues in the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs in Belfast and the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in London.

After the meeting, the Minister for Agriculture and Food, Ms Mary Coughlan TD, thanked the members of the Group for convening so quickly and for their ongoing advice which she said she appreciated.

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