

DEPARTMENT MEETS TO REVIEW OUTBREAK OF AVIAN 'FLU IN ENGLAND

The Minister for Agriculture and Food, Mary Coughlan T.D., today confirmed that the Management Committee of her Department's National Disease Control Centre met this morning to assess the significance of the outbreak of H5N1 avian 'flu on a poultry farm in Suffolk.

The Committee reviewed the Department's contingency arrangements and a number of the measures have now been stepped up. The Department is also reassessing the risk of the introduction of the disease into Ireland and, in this regard, officials are in contact with colleagues in the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in London and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development in Belfast as well as the European Commission in Brussels.

Minister Coughlan said "I am confident that the extensive range of contingency measures in place, including legislative provisions, are appropriate to deal with the existing threat and I will not hesitate to introduce such further measures as would be appropriate to deal with any increased threat".

The Department has in place a wild bird surveillance programme which is targeting priority areas which are regarded as being at the greatest risk of the introduction of avian flu', taking account of a number specified criteria.

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