

MINISTER COUGHLAN INTRODUCES PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES FOLLOWING OUTBREAK OF AVIAN 'FLU IN ENGLAND

The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Mary Coughlan TD, today met members of the Management Committee of her Department's National Disease Control Centre (NDCC) to review the most recent developments relating to the case of avian 'flu in England.

Minister Coughlan said she had in particular noted confirmation by the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) that the strain of virus is H5N1 and that, as a consequence, further restrictions had been put in place over a wider area in East Anglia and that a ban had been imposed on bird gatherings and shows as well as pigeon racing in England.

The Minister confirmed that, as a precautionary measure and along with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development in Northern Ireland (DARD), her Department was placing a ban on the participation of birds from Great Britain at bird shows and gatherings in Ireland. The introduction of simultaneous measures on both sides of the border was, according to the Minister, 'a further example of the application of an all-island approach to the threat of the introduction of avian 'flu to the island of Ireland.'

Ms Coughlan also said that her officials had been in contact with colleagues in those agencies on whose assistance they would rely in the event of an outbreak of avian 'flu in this country, including An Garda Síochána, the Department of Defence, the Civil Defence and was taking ornithological advice from the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government as well as BirdWatch Ireland. She urged flockowners to continue to take appropriate biosecurity measures in relation to their flocks.

The Minister said that her Department was currently processing some 430 grant applications from commercial poultry flockowners for the installation of water chlorination facilities which would significantly reduce the likelihood of the introduction of the virus into commercial poultry houses through infected water supplies.

Finally, Minister Coughlan said that she and her officials would continue to monitor developments carefully and would keep the existing contingency arrangements under constant review.

13 November 2007 All of the information featured on this page is the copyright of the Department of Agriculture and Food unless otherwise indicated.