

RSPCA Assured offers support to poultry farmers during AI outbreaks

Measures include additional biosecurity during assessments and tips for bird welfare during housing orders

Tuesday 5 August 2025

As new outbreaks of avian influenza (HPAI) cause concern, RSPCA Assured is offering advice and support to poultry farmers.

Recognising the challenges farmers face, RSPCA Assured remains committed to providing [flexible farm assessments](#) to help members during outbreaks.

This means that in certain circumstances - for example, where there's a compulsory housing order or a farm is within a 10km or 3km AI control zone - there will be alternative options that members may be able to choose instead of an in-person assessment, such as a desktop or virtual visit*.



Allan Pearson, farming and technical engagement manager at RSPCA Assured, says: "Sadly, increased avian influenza outbreaks have become a new reality, and we understand how stressful and worrying this is for our members. We're committed to supporting farmers through these tough times. Our [farming and technical engagement team](#) is always on hand to offer advice and practical guidance to ensure members meet the RSPCA welfare standards throughout an outbreak.

"We encourage any RSPCA Assured member who has concerns about avian influenza or has any questions to [get in touch](#), and we'll be happy to help."

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The RSPCA Assured website also has a [dedicated area](#) offering detailed information about additional biosecurity measures, advice on contingency planning and improving flock welfare during a housing order.

RSPCA Assured assessors will follow each site's specific biosecurity procedures alongside the scheme's stringent measures, which include:

- Using foot dips, sanitising facilities and wearing foot coverings
- Carrying FFP3 face masks and disposable gloves in case they are needed
- If moving between sheds, assessors will follow the members' lead on where to take off and put on additional PPE
- At the end of the visit, assessors remove all PPE where the member requests
- If an assessor has parked a vehicle on the main site, they will spray the wheels immediately after the last gate as they leave.

There are also several proactive measures producers can take to improve flock welfare during a housing order. These include:

- Putting extra enrichment inside sheds to help birds perform important foraging behaviours. For example, alfalfa or lucerne hanging in hay nets or pecking blocks offer birds a reward for interacting with them
- For laying hens and turkeys, scattering feed or insoluble/soluble grit on the litter can also provide interest and stimulate natural foraging behaviour
- Checking enrichments are clean and have been stored under cover to avoid introducing avian influenza to the shed.
- Introducing materials with fine particles to encourage birds to dust bathe whilst living indoors.

Further information and advice is available for members on the [RSPCA Assured website](#).

-ends-

Notes to editors:

*Please note that the following members will not be able to defer their in-person assessment or receive a virtual visit to help ensure the integrity of the RSPCA Assured scheme:

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- New member applications
- Seasonal turkey production
- Members involved in active complaints or incidents
- Members with current sanctions in place or who have received sanctions within the previous two years.
- All sites must be seen 'in person' either within the last 14 months or before they renew certification (whichever comes first).

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