



Position statement on the collection and disposal of dead birds during street cleansing activities V1.0 19 December 2022

The recent outbreak of Avian Influenza in the British Isles has led to several organisations contacting WISH for guidance on the appropriate precautions to take when collecting dead birds during cleansing activities in streets, roads, parks, and other public areas.

After consulting with the industry, HSE (Health and Safety Executive) experts and others, on considering the advice in the documents listed at (6) below and having specifically consulted with the HSE on the contents of this position statement, WISH indicates its view as follows.

1. *Should All dead birds be treated as being potentially infected with Avian Flu?*

No. There are many reasons why birds die and so not every dead bird should be considered to have died of Avian Influenza. It might be reasonable to assume that a bird is potentially infected with Avian Influenza if:

- i. There have been wild bird deaths at the same location which have been confirmed as Avian Influenza incidents
- ii. There are larger numbers of dead birds ('die offs') of unknown cause, for example five or more in one location especially where the birds are not typical garden bird species (typical garden species being blackbirds, magpies, tits, finches, collared dove, woodpigeon, robins etc)

2. *What PPE and procedures are appropriate for collecting dead birds **not** assumed as being infected with Avian Flu?*

All dead animals and birds have the potential to be infected with a wide range of zoonoses, bacteria and other harmful organisms. The same arrangements can be used as those which would apply to any dead animal:

- a) Where possible avoid handling dead animals and birds directly, use a tool such as a litter picker for small bodies, a shovel or similar for larger bodies
- b) Wear suitable impermeable gloves
- c) If there is a significant risk of particles or liquids entering the eyes or mouth, wear a face covering or dust mask and eye protection
- d) Wear suitable footwear which can be washed or decontaminated if required
- e) Wear suitable clothing (workwear) that can be bagged and washed if it becomes contaminated

- f) Bagging of the body:
- i. Pick up the body using a tool. If that is not possible and the body must be handled, wear impermeable gloves, or handle with a folded over bag
 - ii. Put the body in a plastic bag and tie it. Take care not to contaminate the outside of the bag
 - iii. If a tool was used to handle the body place it, or the parts of it which might be contaminated in a leakproof bag. Ensure that it is washed or decontaminated at the first opportunity and dispose of the contaminated bag as in (iv) below with other household or municipal waste*
 - iv. Put the body in a second leakproof plastic bag. If handled directly with gloves or a plastic bag place those in the second bag. Take care not to touch the outside of contaminated gloves or bags with bare hands
 - v. Dispose of the bag with other household or municipal waste*
 - vi. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water
- * Where facilities are available for the disposal of animal carcasses, these should be used*

3. Do I need to undertake a separate risk or COSHH assessment for collecting dead birds?

If you already collect dead animals and birds, which are found during street or other cleansing activities, the risk and COSHH assessments should already take into account the risks associated with handling dead animals, and birds, which are **NOT** assumed to be infected with Avian Influenza.

The collection of dead birds which **ARE** assumed to be infected with Avian Influenza would be governed by the guidance given in the documents at (6) below (which indicate the need for specific risk and COSHH assessment) and is outside of the scope of this position statement.

4. What if we are asked to collect dead domestic birds/poultry from homeowners/small holdings/farmers?

Such activities are outside of the scope of this position statement. You should consult the information and guidance below and contact DEFRA and APHA

5. Do I need to report finding a dead bird?

You should report the finding of large numbers of dead wild birds:

1 or more dead birds of prey (such as an owl, hawk, or buzzard)

3 or more dead birds that include at least 1 gull, swan, goose, or duck

5 or more dead wild birds of any species

Further information about reporting can be found here <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/report-dead-wild-birds>

6. *Additional information and guidance:*

- [Bird flu \(avian influenza\): how to spot it and report it - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/bird-flu-avian-influenza-how-to-spot-it-and-report-it)
- [Mitigation strategy for avian influenza in wild birds in England and Wales - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/mitigation-strategy-for-avian-influenza-in-wild-birds-in-england-and-wales)
- [Notifiable Avian Disease Control Strategy for Great Britain.](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/notifiable-avian-disease-control-strategy-for-great-britain)
- [national guidance for managing the human health risk of avian influenza in poultry and wild birds](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-guidance-for-managing-the-human-health-risk-of-avian-influenza-in-poultry-and-wild-birds)
- <https://www.hse.gov.uk/agriculture/zoonoses-data-sheets/avian-influenza.htm>
- [*Avoiding the risk of infection when working with poultry that is suspected of having H5 or H7 notifiable avian influenza \(hse.gov.uk\)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/agriculture/zoonoses-data-sheets/avian-influenza.htm)
- <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/removing-and-disposing-of-dead-wild-birds>
- <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/report-dead-wild-birds>

This position statement will be kept under review and may be changed if the circumstances of the Avian Influenza outbreak change.



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