

Birmingham City Council

Avian Influenza Policy for management of outbreaks on waterbodies, in public parks and similar settings

Aim of policy

This policy is to document how BCC will tackle notifications of Avian Influenza (AI) in the wild bird population.

Objectives

- To assist in the decision-making process for BCC surrounding the management of Avian Influenza in wild birds in council owned parks, waterbodies and similar.
- To provide a framework for this decision-making process on actions taken by BCC.
- To ensure the most current and appropriate advice is sought prior to any action being taken.
- To ensure the Health, Safety and Welfare of Council staff and Members of the public.

Scope of this policy

This policy covers the management of an Avian Influenza outbreak;

- on land and water courses owned and managed by Birmingham City Council
- Removal of dead birds (related to Avian Influenza) from BCC land
- Controls and mitigations to reduce transmission of AI to BCC staff engaged in the management of land where AI outbreaks occur
- Controls, surveillance, and preventative measures surrounding BCC employees engaged in the removal of dead birds from AI
- Where decisions are to be made on use by The Public and others of council owned land and water
- How Controls are stood down
- Comm's messaging
- Governance, disputes and resolutions

The policy aid in identifying the legal duties on the Local Authority in terms as the provider of open spaces for the public at large and keeping residents and visitors to Birmingham safe; and duties to its staff and agents under the Health & Safety at Work Act and attendant employment policies.

This policy is put together using the most current and available advice to UK Local Authorities regarding management of AI outbreaks in the wild bird population. This policy will be reviewed and update whenever it is made aware of changes to this advice and guidance.

Birmingham City Council must manage risks during an Avian Influenza outbreak. The main identified risks are:

1. Risk of transmission of the Avian Influenza virus to staff employed by Birmingham City Council (BCC) who come into contact with dead birds that have died from Avian influenza. Contact due to
 - a. Officers work as defined by job description
 - b. Officers involved directly in the removal, transportation, and disposal of deceased birds within an Avian Influenza Protection Zone or Surveillance Zone
2. Risk of transmission of Avian Influenza to persons using BCC land and watercourses where an Avian Influenza outbreak has been declared.
3. Liability resulting from decisions made by BCC

Mitigating the risks

Governance

BCC will ensure that Avian Influenza is prioritised and reported at the Environmental Cell with information and actions cascaded to Tactical Lead under Emergency Plan. The decision regarding BCC actions will be agreed by the Chair of the Environmental Cell or their nominated deputy(ies).

BCC will work with all external partners (Defra, APHA, RSPCA, UKHSA, HSE, EA etc) involved in the UK Avian influenza response with respect to data and information flow, attendance at Incident management meetings (IMTs), determining outbreak risk assessments, responding to advice provided and any other information or intervention such partners recommend and advise BCC.

BCC will look to actively consult and meet groups and businesses who may be affected by its decisions, as long as these meetings do not delay decisions to a point that they have adverse health impacts on residents and visitors to the city.

All policies, procedures, Risk Assessments and Safe working practices will be drafted in accordance with current UK legislation and mitigations determined using the most up to date advice provided by the relevant organisations. All policies, procedures, Risk Assessments and Safe working practices will be reviewed and consulted with legal services, corporate health and safety and relevant unions

BCC staff

Information and briefings on the current AI status will be provided to all staff including general information and public wide controls to occupational specific information and controls. Health advice will be provided by BCC Public Health team, Occupational Health and UKHSA. Advice will be disseminated promptly.

Operational Risk Assessments, Safe Working Procedures (SWP) and associated training will be provided proportionate to the occupational risk of staff by individual BCC sections and consulted with Corporate Health and Safety team.

Specific Risk Assessments, Safe Working Procedures and associated training for nominated BCC employees dealing with onsite Avian Influenza response and collection, transport and disposal of carcasses will be provided by each relevant section of BCC. Full and appropriate Personal Protective Equipment and operational equipment will be provided to such employees in line with Risk Assessments, SWP and current UK guidance.

BCC will ensure that nominated staff who undertake interventions to remove carcasses undertake health surveillance by UKHSA and are offered Tamiflu if UKHSA determine this is necessary.

General public usage of BCC land, and watercourses for specific activities

Public information on the current situation regarding Avian influenza including locations of current AI notifications, current controls and mitigations in place, and health awareness information will be provided to the public through BCC Communications Teams. This should be appropriate to the known risk and regularly. BCC will utilise website, approved social media platforms, press releases and onsite (park land) information signage. Other methods of disseminating information and advice may be determined where required (e.g., WhatsApp) if a specific group is required, but in general, public messaging will be undertaken.

In determining the best course of action with regard to the continuation of activities within parks, watercourses and BCC owned land where an Avian Influenza outbreak is occurring, BCC will be led by UKHSA, Defra, APHA and HSE advice and guidance through the undertaking of a risk assessment for each situation. In addition, BCC must consider its over-arching duty to keep residents and visitors safe as well as any liability for actions or inactions given the known advice at the time of decision.

It is noted that there is limited Government guidance for Local Authorities regarding the management of Avian Influenza within the wild bird population and no current Government guidance as to the management of AI risks to those participating in activities in parks and on watercourses. Therefore, BCC will make such decisions on the use of a park or water course through the:

- UKHSA Avian influenza risk assessment process
- UKHSA, HSE, Defra and APHA guidance/advice
- Environment Cell Risk Assessment

Where advice from any partners states that there is a high risk of transmission of AI to humans, The Environment Cell will consider the proportionate response to the advice received. It should be noted in the absence of substantive information to the

contrary then the advice should be followed. If possible interested parties will be contacted and view sought in advance.

The decision will be relayed to any persons whose activities are requested to cease and therefore permission to use the water will be withdrawn. BCC will regularly consult with relevant partners to determine their current position on each site and determine the criteria for removal of these controls. This will be at least fortnightly. BCC will also try and determine the conditions to be fulfilled to enable activities to resume.

In the absence of the above, BCC will determine through the Environment Cell Risk Assessment the best course of action for all land it owns/manages and whether permission to use the land/water remains during a developing AI incident. Where the Environment Cell is considering closing land or waters or has been advised to close land or waters, then the following must be complied with by the organisers of any event who wish to continue to use the land/waters:

- a) The current advice from UKHSA and APHA on the use of land and watercourses where AI has been notified.
- b) Where an activity undertaken on a water course or park is part of a non BCC activity (i.e. business/ charity or voluntary group), it will be expected that this activity organiser will provide to BCC the following:
 - provide a risk assessment to BCC for review and determination of suitability of activity in light of known risk.
 - where permission to use the water is not withdrawn the mitigations and controls that are to be put in place with the participants.
 - Any controls that must be in place prior to use of the land or waters to be assessed by nominated BCC staff.
 - provide evidence of public liability insurance as necessary.
 - A written document acknowledging the risks of continuing the activity is with the organisers of the activity and that each participant is participating in-light of the known risk/risk assessment.

Note: Where individuals cannot make their own independent decision on the risks they are exposed to (age or capacity) this must be advised to the council prior to any approvals for the land/water being used.

The land-owning departments of the council must consider the physical environment and make recommendations to the Environment Cell on whether land/waters should be closed; remain open or have partial restrictions:

- The physical contamination of the area:
 - Number of dead birds found on the water or land;
 - Number of birds using the land/water

- the number of and position of the dead birds
- amount of other potential contaminants – feathers, faecal matter, nesting material
- Potential contamination in relation to areas where the activities are to be undertaken (including ingress and egress)

- Mitigations and controls
- Numbers of Live birds with AI symptoms or size of flock
- Mitigations and controls that are possible in the area/activity
- Surveillance, monitoring and reporting of dead and sick birds
- compliance of pool users in putting in and using additional protective measures
- Water temperature (if able to be measured). Where there is the ability measure the water temperature where the temperature is found above 10°C then the potential for high AI viral load within the water is low.

Standing down of any current mitigations and controls

This will be determined by the Environment cell decision process using

- UKHSA Avian influenza risk assessment process (which includes the most current UKHSA and APHA guidance)
- Environment Cell Risk Assessment
 - No bird deaths attributed to the affected pool
 - Confirmation and acceptance of pool users Risk Assessments and increased hygiene procedures.
 - Lifting of any DEFRA notifications and restrictions in place.

Communications and information to BCC staff and Birmingham citizens

All public notices are to be through the council's communications team processes and should be signed off by the chair of the Environment Cell or their nominated Deputy. In instances where the AI is in Humans then this will be led by the Director of Public Health outside of this policy.

Approved @ Env' Cell Meeting 28/11/22 V1 November 2022