



# The Poultry Club OF GREAT BRITAIN

Patron: HRH The Prince of Wales

## **PRESS RELEASE – IMMEDIATE: Poultry Club of Great Britain liaisons welcome a closer relationship with DEFRA and relevant authorities**

The Poultry Club of Great Britain (PCGB) and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) both recognise the challenges presented to the poultry-keeping fancy from the updated general licence, and have committed to working together to demystify the regulations for those compelled by them.

PCGB representatives Philippe Wilson and Lee Grant were both buoyed by the positive discussion with DEFRA, which took place in London last week. The meeting followed a period without any confirmed avian influenza infections in the UK and presented opportunities for the two organisations to work closely together in future to create and disseminate purposeful biosecurity information.

### **Speaking afterwards, Lee Grant said:**

“The PCGB continues to develop its good relationship with the authorities and the prospect of jointly supporting an online information portal is both welcome and encouraging. There has been much confusion regarding the rules, particularly the lock-down periods, with some individuals misrepresenting the licence conditions and scaremongering online – resulting in a plethora of calls and emails to both DEFRA and the PCGB from gatherings’ organisers and concerned keepers.

Fortunately, the team are in regular contact with DEFRA and have provided assurances to PCGB members and the wider poultry fraternity that the rules are not there to catch out our members, but simply to reduce the risk of avian influenza spreading when birds from varying locations are mixed – particularly when returning ‘new’ birds to your own premises.

It’s hugely beneficial to be in this position where we can provide accurate information to our members first-hand and to see organisers at PCGB affiliated societies making a success of following the rules”.

### **Adding, Philippe Wilson said:**

“Anyone that may be unsure of the rules, their obligations as organisers, or participants should in the first instance look to the PCGB for assistance. We are here to support our members and the suite of guidance materials PCGB has provided is an essential starting point.

It is reassuring that through this positive relationship with DEFRA and APHA, we remain a key contact and information is exchanged freely and without prejudice towards the common goal of eliminating this risk to our poultry.

I am reassured, having seen and taken the steps personally to achieve biosecurity in diverse settings during the summer gatherings, that the measures are both practical and achievable and I commend PCGB members for their ongoing efforts”.

### **Key Notes from the meeting held on the 7<sup>th</sup> July 2017 include:**

#### **1. Disease Update:**

- Whilst there are no active cases of avian influenza in the UK at present, England will not achieve ‘AI disease freedom’ status’ until 13<sup>th</sup> Sept (providing there are no further cases)
- Meaning the poultry and egg industry has, and continues to be under restriction, with no poultry and egg trade to 3<sup>rd</sup> countries (it’s not just PCGB members that are affected...)
- Therefore, it is an absolute priority for the authorities to achieve AI freedom



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- The current general licence is likely to remain in-place for a further 12-months as a minimum
- Each of the 13 premises that were affected by AI are still under certain restrictions as the deep cleansing is completed at each
- Of the 13 infected premises, six were backyard flocks, three were game farms and the remainder commercial units
- The risk of infection remains high when species are mixed, particularly when waterfowl are mixed with chickens (symptoms may not be visible in ducks / geese – but deadly in chickens)
- The risk to humans is relatively low. However, H5N1 and particularly H7N9 have been known to mutate and infect humans
- During this time of heightened risk, a small number of poultry sites may be randomly selected by the authorities to provide samples to test against AI.

## 2. Unified Communications Strategy

- It is essential to continue to inform poultry keepers of the threat of AI, particularly those that frequently attend poultry gatherings
- PCGB and DEFRA will work together, alongside devolved administrations and organisations such as the British Poultry Council and the NFU to provide accurate and accessible information in a non-threatening environment
- The intention is to publish relevant biosecurity measures and information, in easy to understand infographics and generally user-friendly material within a single portal
- This could be in the form of a satellite resource centre
- DEFRA continue to encourage all keepers to join the Poultry Register, so that they can be kept up-to-date on AI and other notifiable diseases by APHA and DEFRA
- Registration is particularly useful when notifying keepers of an outbreak and if they fall within a Protection or Surveillance zone – in-turn assisting in obeying the licence
- DEFRA were impressed with the innovative ways keepers followed the winter housing restrictions and aim to share some of the more creative compliant examples in the portal.

## 3. Compulsory Individual Identification

- Whilst compulsory identification could provide an opportunity to trace individual birds and keepers, it is recognised that without the accompanying movement records akin to cattle & sheep – it would be impossible to impose such a system in the UK
- Recognised that EU and other UK livestock follow individual identification procedures
- Whilst it is recognised that throughout the EU, leg-ringing and wing-tagging exhibition poultry is compulsory, there are insufficient resources and infrastructure in place to make it a UK success – given also the implications on the wider commercial industry
- No appetite for a compulsory poultry identification scheme in the UK at present. However, it is strongly encouraged as best-practice and it has not been ruled out in the longer-term



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#### 4. Rules and Restrictions for Shows and Showing (clarified later as a GB-wide arrangement)

- Is there a 13-day standstill?
- No. The reference to “13-days” within the general licence, is offered as a clarification, secondary to the definition of a bird gathering, to provide a timeframe for those operating intermittent activities (such as internet sales) so that they can operate without being classified as a gathering.
- It is not a movement ‘standstill’ or a ‘rule’ and does not apply to a participant's own birds, or to a participant that attends a poultry gathering. In practice, this means that there are no legal restrictions on birds returning to their place of origin after attending a show.
- What is the “7-day rule” and how do I apply it, as a show organiser?
- It is a requirement of the general licence that the show organiser/licensee must distribute biosecurity advice to any participant, which includes the following best practice recommendations:
  1. birds should be inspected for signs of illness before travelling to any gathering, and
  2. any birds travelling home from a gathering (returning stock or new) should be isolated from other birds at the premises and monitored for signs of illness for at least 7 days.
- Show organisers/licensees may wish to require evidence of the above “best practices” from their attendees, but their decision should take into account the specificities of their own situation and any limitations a requirement may pose.
- Complaints and suspicion of abuse should be reported to the Local Authority/Trading Standards.

#### Further information is available at:

- [Defra](#)
- [Scottish Government](#)
- [Welsh Government](#)
- [FAQ page on bird gatherings](#)

#### Ends

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