

## **Are you planning to catch-up this season?**

Aim to Sustain is calling on all shoot managers and gamekeepers who plan to catch-up gamebirds this season to continue to observe a 21-day standstill period before moving caught-up birds to another location.

The 21-day standstill, or quarantine period, was included in the restrictions imposed by Avian Influenza Prevention Zones (AIPZs) that were introduced across the UK in November 2022 and were subsequently lifted in early summer this year.

Spike Butcher, Aim to Sustain's operations director, said: "While the risk of avian influenza has decreased in captive and wild birds and AIPZs are no longer in place, the risk has not gone away. Aim to Sustain partners are calling on those who plan to catch-up to continue to observe the 21-day standstill period and to make it an accepted best practice routine."

To assist people catching up birds this year, Aim to Sustain has produced updated guidance.

### **Catching-up gamebirds**

Aim to Sustain strongly recommends that anyone catching-up gamebirds follows a minimum 21-day standstill or quarantine period before any birds caught-up are moved off the premises.

They should remain in the holding pen/building for 21 days after the last caught-up bird was introduced to it before being moved. In this context, being moved means moving the birds to a new premises, shoot, game farm or other holding than that where they were caught-up.

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **When can I catch-up?**

In England and Wales catching-up is legal until the end of the shooting season (1 February). In Scotland it is legal until 28 February. Catching-up is illegal after these dates.

#### **Why is Aim to Sustain recommending caught-up birds be held for 21 days?**

In December 2022 Defra conducted a risk assessment relating to catching up gamebirds and as a result the Avian Influenza Prevention Zones (AIPZs) in force across the UK were amended. These amendments included legal requirements for a standstill or quarantine period of 21 days before caught gamebirds could be moved to a new premises. This requirement was in line with many other disease control policies and 21 days was deemed sufficient for any presence of avian influenza to become noticeable.

Whilst there is an improving picture in relation to avian influenza the risks have not gone away, and the shooting sector must continue to play its part in combatting the disease. Following such measures would help combat the spread of the disease if a case was confirmed in caught-up birds, (in 2023 there were no cases of AI that resulted from catching-up). Such precautions should cause limited disruption to those who catch-up gamebirds for breeding purposes.

#### **Can I still catch-up if I am within an avian influenza disease control zone?**

There are different types of control zone including a 3km Protection Zone (PZ), a 10km Surveillance Zone (SZ), or a 3km Captive Bird (Monitoring) Controlled Zone (CBMZ) which can be put in place following a confirmed case of Avian Influenza (with kept birds).

If you are in a PZ or an SZ you are likely to still be able to catch-up birds, but you cannot move caught-up birds off your premises until the zone has been lifted and you are no longer restricted. A CBMZ does not restrict bird movements, but best practice would be to treat it as if it does. The closer you are to the infected premises that triggered the zone the greater the risk of catching-up infected birds.

Remember that if any part of your premises is in a disease controls zone, then the whole premises is deemed to be in the zone. You can check if you are affected by any of the disease control zones by looking at the APHA interactive map [here](#). If you click on the search icon in the top left corner you can enter your postcode and see your exact location on the map.

### **If my premises is in the free area (not in a disease control zone), can I move caught up birds into a zone?**

Movement from outside, into a PZ or an SZ would not be allowed unless licenced by APHA. A CBMZ would not prevent this but as above, best practice would be to avoid doing this.

### **If Avian Influenza (AI) was found in wild birds on our shoot or nearby, can I still catch-up?**

There is no law preventing this, but common sense suggests that it will be very risky. Defra, Scottish Government and Welsh Government have previously strongly advised keepers not to catch-up if they are in an area known to have, or have had, AI.

### **What happens if my caught-up birds are infected with AI?**

As soon as the birds are caught-up and under your 'control' they are captive and if they contracted AI your premises will become an Infected Premises (IP) and be treated like any other IP. All birds on site will be culled and restrictions will be placed on the premises. Healthy birds culled for disease control purposes would attract compensation as per DEFRA's valuation tables.

### **Do I need to complete the Poultry Register for caught-up birds?**

It is a legal requirement to complete the register if you keep 50 or more captive poultry for any period of time and this includes gamebirds. You must complete the Poultry Register even if you release the birds as soon as they come under your care. You can find out more and register [here](#)

You should also sign up for poultry alerts [here](#) which will give you early details of any confirmed cases.

### **What other precautions should I be taking?**

You should seek advice from your gamebird vet (and other sources if relevant) for your activities, always follow high standards of biosecurity and any specific conditions which may be in place for your location. Further details of these can be obtained from Aim to Sustain partners. It is also important to remember that as tackling disease control is a devolved matter, there can be different rules which apply in each of the home countries.