# Strategies for managing bird flu lockdown

Intemax®

Whitepaper

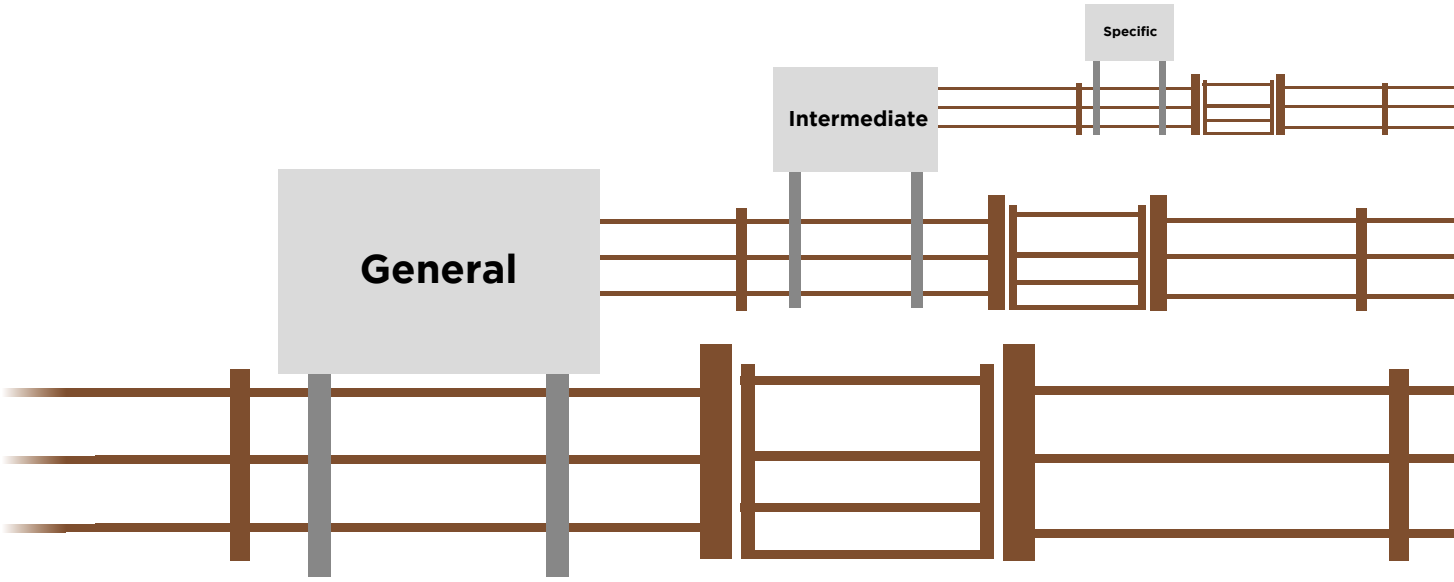
# Keeping bird flu at bay and managing the enforced housing order

Following further outbreaks, the commercial poultry industry is bracing itself for yet another period of vigilance against high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI). Poultry farmers across the UK will be on high alert for signs of HPAI, and enforced housing of free-range flocks is inevitable. Naturally, this doesn't affect caged or barn birds, who are enclosed anyway, but it does mark a significant change for birds who are accustomed to ranging outdoors.

Click to view the Animal & Plant Health Agency (APHA) Interactive Avian Influenza Disease Map.

## Tightening biosecurity to prevent bird flu outbreaks

Scrupulous biosecurity and hygiene measures are the best form of defence against HPAI. The British Egg Industry Council (BEIC) and the Red Tractor scheme recently issued guidance to meet the need for heightened biosecurity measures. We covered the changes in detail in our whitepaper 'Biosecurity guidelines to tackle bird flu', but suffice to say much of the focus was on protecting flocks by further tightening biosecurity procedures that are already considered best practice.




BEIC recommends 3 different biosecure areas

# Stopping bird flu: At the farm gate

Traffic entering the farm from outside is obviously a significant risk factor; vehicles may well be coming from other farms and they can also carry in HPAI in the form of wild bird faeces. Many farms are opting for automated disinfection facilities because this takes back control of the disinfection process, rather than relying on drivers exiting their vehicles and taking the time to manually disinfect the vehicle to the consistently high standard required.

A gate such as the Sanigene 360 system is the gold standard of vehicle disinfection - it has 42 spray nozzles that can access hard to reach areas around the wheels and chassis, as well as the roof of the vehicle (where bird faeces could remain undetected). The driver remains in the cab whilst the vehicle is disinfected, making the process as quick and easy as possible, without compromising on disinfection.

# Stopping bird flu: At the shed door

Perimeter biosecurity is key to preventing wild bird incursion – silos need to be 100% secure and good shed management procedures should ensure that there is no feed spillage left lying around to encourage wild birds, and no water ingress which will bring in disease. One of the areas where contamination risk has been found to be greatest is just outside the shed door, so a thorough and consistent approach to foot disinfection will help to reduce this threat. A colour-coded footwear system (as recommended by BEIC) is a good way of instilling the collective discipline of changing footwear and policing biosecurity procedures. For example, if personnel use black boots for outdoors, white boots in the control room and green boots in the bird area – it is very easy to see when footwear is not being changed and cross-contamination might be occurring! It is wise to limit foot traffic where possible, and to ensure that any essential visitors follow the same disinfection procedures. Having plenty of PPE for visitors over the winter months is also important.


# Enforced housing orders can lead to boredom

Previous years have seen an unusually long enforced housing order for free range flocks. This was obviously felt to be essential to help stem the spread of HPAI, but was disruptive for free-range egg farmers as the housing order exceeded the 16-week grace period where eggs are still able to be marketed as 'free-range'.

Should flocks need to be kept inside all the time rather than being able to range outside in the coming months, poultry farmers may see a rise in bird stress, boredom and increased feather pecking in some flocks.

Agrivite
Nutri-Peck


# Pecking blocks can reduce stress and boredom

In this newly enclosed environment, allowing poultry to exhibit natural behaviour, such as pecking, can help to reduce stress and boredom. Providing natural enrichment in the form of pecking blocks is a good way to encourage prolonged pecking activity in a safe and healthy way, whilst supporting natural beak wear at the same time.

A nutritionally-enhanced pecking block, such as Agrivite Nutri-Peck, can also provide additional minerals, electrolytes and trace elements to promote good skeleton health and egg shell quality. The blocks come individually wrapped to maintain biosecurity, and are designed to last 8-12 weeks to maintain the birds' interest over a long period of time and so keep costs down. See the success of our pecking block trial here.

# Make the environment less stressful

We've written in detail about feather pecking and boredom before but, in brief, there are tricks of the trade that can make the overall environment less stressful. Dimming the lights can help to reduce stress levels, and playing the radio can provide soothing ambient background noise. Frequenting the sheds more often and maintaining a low-level presence can help the birds become accustomed to interruption and noise, although this obviously has to be balanced with biosecurity protocols. If a bird does show signs of illness, it's best to remove it as soon as possible to avoid it becoming a pecking target.

## Dim the lights

## Play the radio

## Swiftly remove ill birds

# Review farm protocols and identify weak spots

Now is an ideal time to review farm protocols, identify any weak spots or things that might have slipped a little in recent months and make appropriate adjustments. There are no guarantees when it comes to HPAI, but tightening biosecurity measures can at least reduce the likelihood of an outbreak, and provide some peace of mind.

Please contact us at sales@intemax.co.uk if you would like to discuss ways to maximise the effectiveness of your biosecurity measures.

Intemax