

An owner wants to book a consult for a pet bird (poultry or other domestic captive bird).

Could it be bird flu?! Triage Tool for Pet and Backyard Poultry

Are any birds showing signs of Avian Influenza?

Avian Influenza can cause a range of clinical signs which can vary between species of bird affected. Signs can include one or more of the following:

Flock signs - Signs in birds sharing housing

1. **Unresponsive**, quiet birds, unwell, don't want to come out and engage as usual. Don't come for treats as usual. Sitting around, fluffed up. They may rally temporarily, but will soon tire.
2. **Huddling** with each other or against coop furniture/equipment, in nests or around drinkers.
3. **Unexpected deaths**, with other birds also looking unwell.

Bird signs typical with notifiable disease:

1. **Neurological signs** – e.g. shaking, twitching, struggling to balance or just falling asleep and head nodding.
2. **Twisted heads** or necks leaving birds looking up at the sky or sideways.
3. **Swollen, bruised** appearance to heads. Facial feathers may stick up in swollen areas.
4. **Weak**, unable to remain standing for long. Look drunk and may struggle to control their wings.
5. **Shivering**, actually tremors as birds don't shiver when they are cold like mammals do.
6. **Bruising or blood spots** of the leg, neck or chest. Check the skin between the feathers.
7. **Severe dyspnea** - without evidence of gapeworm, ascites or space-occupying masses (birds have no diaphragm).

Bird signs typical with common diseases in hens:

Individual birds with these symptoms, in an otherwise well flock are unlikely to be affected by highly pathogenic Avian Influenza. However, these signs are very suspicious of Avian Influenza when combined with those previously mentioned and/or when multiple birds are suddenly affected all at once:

1. Coughing sneezing or gaping, esp. in birds recently wormed for gapeworm
2. Focal facial swelling e.g. around the eyes
3. Reduction in laying
4. Lethargy
5. Diarrhoea – abnormally coloured or excessively watery faeces

If you suspect Avian Influenza in poultry or other captive birds, you must report it immediately by calling:
03000 200 301 if you're in England
03003 038 268 if you're in Wales
your local Field Services Office if you're in Scotland.

Avian Influenza suspected

Consulting vet should triage case via telephone or video to either confirm suspicion of Avian Influenza, or to exclude it as a top differential diagnosis.

Avian Influenza is an unlikely primary differential diagnosis in this case

