

Increasing numbers of pheasants and other gamebirds are being reared each year and released into the wild, mostly for sport. In the summer months, gamebird flocks may experience health problems and therefore veterinarians may be presented with pheasants, partridges or other gamebirds. The following provides general advice and guidance about gamebird keeping in Great Britain (GB). Separate information is also available summarising common health and disease problems of gamebirds in GB. Similar guidance and information is also available for backyard flocks:

- Backyard poultry in Great Britain: General guidance (excluding gamebirds)
- Common diseases of backyard poultry in Great Britain
- Common diseases of gamebirds in Great Britain

Gamebird keeping regulations and guidance

Defra and the Administrations of Scotland and Wales have provided a Code of Practice for the Welfare of Gamebird Reared for Sporting Purposes. The Code provides gamebird farmers/keepers with information on how to meet the welfare needs of their animals, as required under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 (and equivalent legislation in Scotland and Wales). See the gov.uk and the Scottish and Welsh Government websites for a copy of the publication.

In Great Britain, gamebirds are covered up to their time of release into the wild by similar welfare legislation to poultry, including the Cruelty to Animals Act 1911, the Animal Welfare Act 2006, and welfare and transport legislation.

Gamebirds are also covered by notifiable disease legislation, including the Avian Influenza (Preventative Measures) (England) Regulations 2006, and equivalent legislation in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

It is also a legal requirement for anyone responsible for a poultry premises - including gamebirds - in GB with a total of 50 or more birds to register their flock. See <https://www.gov.uk/poultry-farms-general-regulations> for more information.

Options for medicating pheasants are limited, as very few products are licensed for use in this species. Products should be prescribed according to the prescribing cascade, supported by veterinary investigations and laboratory findings, if possible with reference to *in vitro* antimicrobial sensitivity results. In all cases, suitable medicine withdrawal periods must be observed, storage and use instructions followed and records kept. Further advice is available on the Veterinary Medicines Directorate webpage on gov.uk.

If you keep, or intend to keep gamebirds (or other poultry), there are other rules and regulations that you must be aware of. Defra have provided information that describes specific legislation, regulations and guidance for poultry owners and keepers, including gamebird flocks, which includes:

- Information on poultry health, specific diseases and infections, biosecurity, hygiene and the responsibility to report suspected outbreaks of notifiable disease: www.gov.uk/poultry-health.
- Guidance that deals specifically with poultry welfare considerations: www.gov.uk/poultry-health.
- General requirements and information for poultry keepers, including registering your flock. It is a legal requirement for anyone responsible for a poultry premises with a total of 50 or more birds to register their flock. This also applies to gamebirds, and they do not all have to be of the same



species. This requirement also applies even if you stock birds for only part of the year. Keepers with less than 50 birds are also encouraged to register voluntarily: www.gov.uk/poultry-farms-general-regulations

- Medicine prescription, use and compliance with withdrawal periods for meat- and egg-producing birds: www.gov.uk/poultry-farms-general-regulations#withdrawal-periods-for-poultry-medicines
- Information about feeding kitchen scraps or leftovers and/or catering waste to poultry/gamebirds - this is illegal and may spread notifiable or other diseases: www.gov.uk/supplying-and-using-animal-by-products-as-farm-animal-feed

Further information is also available for poultry/gamebird keepers in Scotland and Wales on their websites:

- www.gov.scot/Topics/farmingrural/Agriculture/Livestock/eggs
- <http://gov.wales/topics/environmentcountryside/ahw/?lang=en>

Notifiable avian diseases

Gamebirds are susceptible to both of the avian notifiable diseases - Avian influenza (AI) and Newcastle disease (ND). If these diseases are suspected in gamebirds, or in any other poultry, by law you must notify your local APHA office. See the APHA webpages on gov.uk for locations and contact details.

Further information about AI and ND is also available on the following webpages:

- OIE information on Avian influenza & Newcastle disease: www.oie.int/
- Avian influenza: <https://www.gov.uk/avian-influenza-bird-flu>
- Avian Influenza: Recognising avian notifiable diseases 1. Irvine R.M., *In Practice*, September 2013, Vol. 35(8), pp. 426-437, online: <http://inpractice.bmj.com/content/35/8/426.full.pdf+html>
- Newcastle disease: <https://www.gov.uk/newcastle-disease>
- Newcastle disease: Recognising avian notifiable diseases 2. Irvine R.M., *In Practice*, October 2013, Vol. 35(9), pp. 518-523, online: <http://inpractice.bmj.com/content/35/9/518.full.pdf+html>
- Clinical disease investigations and differential diagnoses in poultry: Recognising avian notifiable diseases 3. Irvine R.M., *In Practice*, November 2013, Vol. 35(10), pp. 597-600, online: <http://inpractice.bmj.com/content/35/10/597.full.pdf+html>