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Dear Bird Keeper,

I am writing to you, as a registered poultry keeper¹ in Scotland, to provide information about upcoming changes to the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone in place across the whole of Scotland. (If you feel that you are receiving this letter in error or need to update your records, please email customerregistration@apha.gsi.gov.uk or telephone 03000 200 301)

Currently, all poultry and captive birds must be either kept indoors or otherwise separated from wild birds. From 28 February, the requirements of the zone will change, meaning that all bird keepers in Scotland can let their birds out provided that they have other enhanced biosecurity measures in place.

Of course, there will still be the option to voluntarily house birds; for some this will continue to be the easiest way to protect them from avian influenza. However, free range producers should be aware that, under EU law, their produce will lose free range status if their birds are housed beyond 28 February.

The full text of the declaration of the amended Prevention Zone, guidance on what enhanced biosecurity measures are, and answers to frequently asked questions are all available on our website now – www.gov.scot/avianinfluenza

I have also included with this letter, a checklist designed to assist bird keepers in Scotland, who wish to let their birds out on 28 February. It highlights actions which should be taken now (prior to birds being released) and actions which should be taken and repeated when birds are allowed outside, in order to protect them against contact with wild birds. The overarching principle of these measures is to make your birds' outdoor area (or range) as unattractive to wild birds as possible.

If bird keepers have any concerns about their biosecurity arrangements, or their birds' welfare, then I would urge them to discuss these with their private vet in the first instance.

SHEILA VOAS
Chief Veterinary Officer (Scotland)

¹ The GB Poultry Keeper database maintained by APHA on behalf of Scottish Government, Defra and Welsh Government www.gov.uk/guidance/poultry-registration

