



Poultry Biosecurity in Scotland

Backyard biosecurity in Scotland: poultry keeping in practice

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Introduction:

Highly pathogenic Avian Influenza (AI) is currently circulating on the continent and can be carried between countries by migrating birds.

The UK has the highest number of free range poultry flocks in Europe and AI is a huge risk to the UK's commercial poultry industry.

Although practices and legislation associated with commercial premises are well documented little was known about the attitudes and habits of non-commercial "backyard" poultry keepers, particularly with regard to biosecurity and disease risk.

Methods:

In order to increase the understanding of the practices of backyard poultry keepers we carried out 39 semi-structured qualitative interviews in Aberdeenshire and Fife



Findings:

- 🐔 The size of flocks varied from 2 to 500 birds.
- 🐔 Flocks of less than 50 birds are generally not registered with the Animal and Plant Health Authority (APHA).
- 🐔 Knowledge of biosecurity practices varied considerably and were not generally adopted.
- 🐔 Few keepers were aware of the correct method of carcass disposal.
- 🐔 Engagement with veterinarians was uncommon.
- 🐔 Poultry regularly change hands either privately or via shows and sales throughout Europe.
- 🐔 Social media has become the "go to place" for the dissemination of information.



Conclusions:

- Backyard keepers need better access to pertinent information.
- Keepers of fewer than 50 birds are "under the radar", authorities are generally unaware of their existence so they do not receive official APHA information and AI alerts.
- EPIC is working with Scottish Government to suggest ways of making contact with non registered keepers.



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