Animal Sanctuaries Concerned about Lack of Awareness of Avian Influenza

Saturday 23 January, 2021

Member animal rescues of One Voice for Animals UK have expressed their concern(1) that they are still seeing numerous instances of domestic birds roaming free despite the recent legal requirement(2) for them to be kept indoors.

Owners of even a couple of pet hens in their back garden must comply with the law to keep their birds indoors. There are also additional biosecurity measures required of keepers to prevent the spread of this virus which has already claimed the lives of over 230,000 birds. Most of these birds have been killed at captive and domestic sites to try to control the spread, though the virus has also been detected in hundreds of wild birds across almost every county in England(3).

Whilst the risk of transmission to humans is thankfully small(4), One Voice for Animals UK's member rescues are keen to see everyone implement the legal measures to protect the birds themselves from this lethal virus. Members also feel that more awareness is needed around people not touching any dead or visibly unwell wild birds they may find. They should report dead wild birds to the Defra helpline: 03459 335577.

Brockswood Animal Sanctuary in Sedgley, West Midlands, has spent countless days putting stringent biosecurity measures into place for its rescued birds. The team was even hard at it over Christmas, working on staff training and signage.

Claire Thompson, Senior Keeper at the Sanctuary said:

"We're trying to do absolutely everything we can to make sure that Avian Influenza doesn't reach us, or spread further. Along with Covid-19 it has had a massive impact on the way that we do our jobs. We had to buy foot dips, extra PPE, and even more disinfectant, only to be unable to recoup the money through visitor admission fees due to the latest lockdown. Dealing with Covid and this at the same time is such a morale killer.

"But perhaps the worst thing is knowing that despite birds constantly needing our help, we're unable to take any in at the moment as we simply cannot risk the health of those that already live here. If just one of our existing rescues was to develop symptoms, all 100 of them would be euthanised. That would be such a heartbreaking end after all they've been through, and all our efforts to give them a safe and happy home.

"Much like the coronavirus, we can help to halt the spread of the Avian Influenza virus by all taking appropriate precautions, particularly bird keepers. Many people are either completely unaware of this, or don't understand the severity of the disease for our bird populations in the UK and beyond."

A spokesperson for One Voice for Animals UK said:

"The UK's small rescues for domestic animals and wildlife had a tough 2020 with the coronavirus pandemic. There has been a huge increase in the number of birds and animals needing care at a time when it's been almost impossible to raise the funds to look after them.

"Knowing how hard staff and volunteers are working to protect our birds, it must be difficult to see not all bird keepers are doing the same. Hopefully we can help raise more awareness about the new requirements."

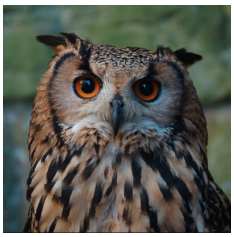
One Voice for Animals UK was launched in April 2020 and supports almost 300 rescue centres and sanctuaries struggling due to the Covid crisis, bringing them into one searchable directory (www.helpanimals.co.uk) for the public to find and support a rescue near them.

Endnotes:

1 https://www.facebook.com/groups/onevoiceforanimalsuk/permalink/2880473732222940/

2 https://www.gov.uk/guidance/avian-influenza-bird-flu#AIPZ

Media:



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3 https://www.facebook.com/AnimalAid/posts/10158673005424277

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