

## Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

24 May 2007

### **Organic poultry: confirmation of legal status of organic confined indoors to comply with veterinary requirements introduced in response to a threat of avian influenza**

*This note supplements the note issued on 07 April 2006*

1. Following the declaration of a protection zone, surveillance zone and restricted zone due to the incidence of H7 Avian Influenza on a farm in Wales, (see <http://www.defra.gov.uk/news/latest/2007/animal-0524.htm> ) organic poultry producers may be concerned about the status of their birds in the event of an order to house coming into effect. Please note that if poultry production premises lie within the zones mentioned in the above declaration they are obliged to comply with the requirements to house and keep isolated described in the declaration.
2. As outlined in the Defra information notices of 23 February 2006 and 07 April 2006 there will not be a loss of status following the housing of birds provided that all other requirements of the Compendium of UK Organic Standards (or any additional standards their own Organic Inspection Body may impose) are complied with. These earlier information notices can be found at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/organic/standards/index.htm> .
3. Specific note should be taken of Annex IB 8.4.7 of the Compendium which states: *Notwithstanding the provisions laid down in points 8.4.2 and 8.4.5, poultry may be kept indoors where operators are required to comply with restrictions, including veterinary restrictions, which are taken on the basis of Community law for the purpose of protecting public or animal health, prevent or restrict access of the poultry to open-air runs. Where poultry are kept indoors, they shall permanently have access to sufficient quantities of roughage and suitable material in order to meet the poultry's ethological needs.*
4. The intention of the specific requirements for "roughage and suitable material" are outlined in the fourth recital (whereas) of Regulation (EC) No 699/2006. This states: *Restricting access to outdoor runs for poultry used to permanent outdoor access may compromise their welfare. In order to reduce the negative impact of such measures the animals shall have permanent access to sufficient quantities of roughage and suitable material allowing each bird to take up roughage, scratch and dust bath according to its needs.*
5. It should be noted that the authorisation to remove the usual access to open air runs is only available when birds are required to be confined to poultry houses by veterinary restrictions imposed to deal with an outbreak of avian influenza.

Any restriction of the birds prior to such restrictions may only take place under the usual allowances of Annex IB 8.4.2 and 8.4.5.

6. Further information on organic production, including the Compendium of UK Organic Standards, can be found at [www.defra.gov.uk/farm/organic](http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/organic) .
7. Many organic flocks will also have free-range status. In the case of free range status different rules apply. Under arrangements previously announced, in the event of a requirement to house the flock for veterinary reasons, poultry products will retain their free-range status for up to 12 weeks.
8. General guidance on Preparing for Avian Influenza – Separating Flocks From Wild Birds can be found in the Defra leaflet of that name (PB11504) at [www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/diseases/notifiable/disease/ai/pdf/separating.pdf](http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/diseases/notifiable/disease/ai/pdf/separating.pdf) .