

Bird registration: fact-checking for smallholders, hobby, pet or backyard keepers

Fact Summary:

From 1 September 2024, all Scottish bird keepers – even those who keep a single bird – must register their bird location(s) on the new **Scottish Kept Bird Register (SKBR)**.

Bird keepers will need to provide information, including their contact details, the location where birds are kept and details of the birds (species, number and what they are kept for).

In Scotland, keepers should register from 1 September 2024 when there will be a new online Scottish Kept Bird Register in place. **The online system (and helpline) will be made available [here](#) from 1 September 2024.** In England and Wales, keepers are encouraged to register their birds via the GB Kept Bird Register ahead of the legal deadline of 1 October 2024.

Premises in Scotland where birds are kept must be re-registered on the new SKBR on 1 September if they were previously registered on the GB Poultry Register.

Keepers must register, or re-register, their bird location(s) online on the SKBR or by telephone between **1 September and 1 December 2024**. This is a legal requirement. **Details must be updated at least annually.**

The registration requirement does not apply to birds on the premises that belong to the order *psittaciformes* (parrot family, including budgerigars) or *passeriformes* (perching birds, including jays and finches), which have no access to the outdoors i.e. are housed in a fully enclosed structure. However, any birds that are taken outdoors at any time, for example to be exercised, trained, or taken to bird gatherings and/or shows, must be registered.

Taking an exempt bird to visit a veterinary practice does not trigger the need for registration.

Registration is free, quick and simple. Once registered, keepers can access their information online at any time.

By registering your bird(s) location, you will receive vital biosecurity information to help protect your flock from disease, along with disease control information in case you are affected by a disease control zone.

You will also help government contain and eradicate notifiable avian diseases, such as highly pathogenic avian influenza and Newcastle disease.

Background

A GB-wide consultation took place in 2023, facilitated by Defra on behalf of the Scottish Government, the Welsh Government and the UK Government. The [joint-government response and summary of responses to the poultry registration consultation](#) was published on gov.uk.

Myths vs Facts:

Myth

If you register on the Scottish Kept Bird Register, your birds will be automatically culled if you are in the 3 km radius around an avian influenza infected premises.

Fact-check

There is no automatic culling policy for avian influenza outbreaks in the UK.

Birds will only be culled if avian influenza is confirmed in your birds following laboratory testing of samples, or a veterinary risk assessment indicates a strong likelihood that a premises keeping birds has significant links to an infected premises where disease has already been confirmed. These links could be via movements of birds, poultry products, people, equipment, or vehicles between premises.

There is no cure for highly pathogenic avian influenza, and once a bird is infected, it is highly unlikely that it will survive, and so humane culling is carried out, not just for disease control, but also for animal welfare reasons.

Compensation is paid by government to keepers for any birds that are healthy at the time they are humanely culled.

Most premises within the 3 km Protection Zone will only receive information and possibly a veterinary inspection to provide reassurance that their birds are fit and healthy. However, sampling of waterfowl may be needed, as these birds often do not show signs of infection, but could still be carrying (and spreading) the virus to other birds.

Myth

Registering on the Scottish Kept Bird Register involves hidden vet fees for keepers to pay.

Fact-check

There is no cost to registering on the Scottish Kept Bird Register. If you are in a disease control zone, any veterinary visits to confirm your birds are healthy are performed at no cost to the keeper.

Myth

The Scottish Government don't want people to own birds or have their own eggs.

Fact-check

We are a nation of animal lovers. Alongside dogs and cats, birds are one of the most popular animals to keep, and the number of backyard flocks has increased in recent years. The Scottish Government is committed to safeguarding the health and welfare of all types of kept animals, and this means taking steps to tackle the risks of animal diseases, such as avian influenza and Newcastle disease affecting birds. Bird registration is an important part of this work.

A similar legal requirement to register the location of all kept birds (with exceptions) is also in place in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Myth

Registering birds on the Scottish Kept Bird Register is difficult and time consuming.

Fact-check

Registering in Scotland

Registration in Scotland will be a quick and simple process through the Scottish Kept Bird Register (SKBR) online site, which will be launched on 1 September. Keepers will then have until 1 December 2024 to register the location of their birds. For details visit: www.gov.scot/register-your-birds

Registration in England and Wales

In England and Wales, registering on the Kept Bird Register is also a quick and simple process, and you can choose the most convenient option for how to do it. They have introduced a streamlined online service '[Register as a keeper of less than 50 poultry or other captive birds](#)', which allows new keepers to register their birds online. Alternatively, if you have no access to the internet, you can call **APHA on 03000 200 301** and apply over the phone.

Myth

Bird registration disregards keepers' privacy, and their information will be shared with other parties.

Fact-check

Keepers' information will be managed in full compliance with UK data protection legislation. Keepers' information will only be shared with those involved in the response to an outbreak, in line with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requirements.

Myth

No enforcement action will be taken if bird keepers fail to comply with registration requirements.

Fact-check

Local authorities are responsible for enforcing the current poultry registration requirements and will retain this responsibility under the new rules. Local authorities will continue to take a careful approach to enforcement, advising keepers of their duty. Formal enforcement action will be considered for continuous non-compliance, including the potential use of fixed penalty notices or prosecution where relevant.

Myth

Backyard flocks have a low / zero risk of getting bird flu. It is the responsibility of large commercial poultry businesses to prevent the spread of bird flu, as it's their birds that are at risk.

Fact-check

Flocks of any size are vulnerable to avian influenza and since October 2021, there have been **83 confirmed outbreaks amongst backyard poultry or small captive bird flocks** across Great Britain. This is around a quarter of all confirmed outbreaks. Every one of these instances has devastating impacts on those keepers and on other keepers and businesses in the surrounding area.

A more comprehensive picture with accurate information on the location of all at-risk birds – smallholder, hobbyists, backyard flocks, pets and commercial poultry and other captive birds – will help to prevent and mitigate notifiable disease outbreaks.

However, the most effective way to protect your flock remains the application of good [biosecurity](#) practices. Biosecurity means simple procedures or steps you can take to prevent disease. The risk of bird flu in the UK from wild birds never disappears completely, so it is essential that bird keepers maintain effective biosecurity all year round.

Q&As

Question

Why are some pet birds exempt, but my pet chickens are not?

Answer

The legislation exempts *psittacines* and *passerines* (e.g. budgies, parrots, canaries and similar species) kept within a dwelling or in a dedicated ‘bird house’ without any access to the outside (i.e. fully enclosed), from the mandatory registration requirement. Given their location, these birds are at very low risk of being exposed to viral disease, as they have no access to wild birds or the open air.

Question

Why are backyard keepers being made to complete complex measures designed for commercial poultry producers?

Answer

There are different registration requirements for keepers with less than 50 birds and those with over 50 birds. The process for keepers with less than 50 birds only asks for the minimum amount of information needed to maintain an accurate and effective picture of where kept birds are located across GB. This overview helps to prevent and control outbreaks of notifiable avian disease. The online process is simple and should only take a few minutes to register for those with low numbers of birds.

Question

I've already registered my birds, do I need to re-register?

Answer

In Scotland, **all bird keepers** will be required to register their birds on the new online **Scottish Kept Bird Register (SKBR)** between 1 September and 1 December 2024, rather than through the GB Poultry Register (GBPR). Those previously registered on the GBPR **will need to re-register on the SKBR**. Keepers will then be required to keep the information up to date when there are changes, and at a minimum on an annual basis from 1 September 2025.

Changes to be notified might include

- your name or address;
- where you keep the birds;
- the species of birds you keep; or

- if the number of birds increases above 50.

In England and Wales, you won't be required to re-register (if you were already registered on the GBPR), but you will also be required to keep the information up to date when there are changes, and at a minimum on an annual basis from 1 September 2025.

Question

What do I need to do if I'm registered, but no longer have/keep any birds?

Answer

If you are based in Scotland, and after initial registration, you decide to no longer keep any birds, please contact the Scottish Kept Bird Register (SKBR) helpline, which will be launched on 1 September along with the SKBR online register.

If you are based in England and Wales and no longer keep any birds, please contact the Customer Registration team on: telephone 0800 634 1112 or email

Customer.Registration@apha.gov.uk

Question

Do I need to register birds that are temporarily taken into an animal welfare establishment and then released again once recovered?

Answer

Detailed guidance has been produced to help streamline the Scottish Kept Bird Register (SKBR) registration process for Animal Welfare establishments licensed under [The Animal Welfare \(Licensing of Activities Involving Animals\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2021](#). If your establishment is licensed under this regulation and have not yet received that guidance you may wish to contact SCOTEID helpline for further assistance. Local Authorities have been provided with this guidance to issue to those licensed establishments in their area.