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trading standards law explained

Registration and records of poultry and other captive birds

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Key legislation

Although the United Kingdom left the European Union (EU) in 2021, certain pieces of legislation (known as 'assimilated law') continue to apply until such time as they are replaced by new UK legislation, revoked or permitted to expire. This means that our guidance still contains references to legislation that originated from the EU.

In this guide, the words 'must' or 'must not' are used where there is a legal requirement to do (or not do) something. The word should' is used where there is established legal guidance or best practice that is likely to help you avoid breaking the law.

This guidance is for England

Owners / keepers of poultry are required to notify / register as keepers of poultry with the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) and to keep records relating to their poultry.

These records include:

- movement of poultry and eggs on to and off premises
- transport and marketing of poultry
- any medicinal treatment administered and mortalities
- measures put in place to control hazards
- results of testing for *Salmonella*

New keepers

If you intend to keep 50 or more birds, you will first need to obtain a county parish holding (CPH) number, which identifies the land where the poultry will be kept. Details of how to apply for a CPH number are available on the GOV.UK website.

Registration

Since 1 October 2024, all keepers of poultry and most other captive birds have been required to register their flocks with APHA via the Kept Bird Register. Previously, only flocks with 50 or more birds were required to be registered.

The registers must be maintained annually and, if there are changes in the meantime, keepers must ensure that records are updated within 30 days of those changes.

The requirements cover most birds, including backyard flocks, birds of prey and pigeons. They do not affect caged pet birds (such as parrots, canaries or budgies) that are kept entirely inside a domestic dwelling or bird house, with no access to open air. However, all poultry species* must be registered, no matter where they are kept.

[*As defined in the Avian Influenza (Preventive Measures) (England) Regulations 2006 - see below.]

The Avian Influenza (Preventive Measures) (England) Regulations 2006 require any person who keeps poultry at any one premises to notify APHA of the following:

- address of premises and holding number (if it has one)
- keeper's name and address and, if different, that of the owner of the poultry and the occupier of the premises
- species kept
- type of husbandry system (meat, eggs or hatching eggs)
- incubator capacity of any hatchery
- number of each species usually kept
- seasonal variations that might result in significant differences in number of species
- number of species with access to open air
- whether the poultry are kept in the presence of, or in the vicinity of, any body of water that attracts wild birds

This is done via the GOV.UK website (see links below).

New keepers must register within 30 days of acquiring the birds.

'Poultry' is defined in the Regulations as "all birds that are reared or kept in captivity for the production of meat or eggs for consumption, the production of other commercial products, for restocking supplies of game or for the purposes of any breeding programme for the production of these categories of birds".

You can register your flock by post or email using the GOV.UK website to download the required forms. Please note that APHA is currently running a two-tier registration system:

- register as a keeper of fewer than 50 birds
- register as a keeper of 50 or more birds

Completed forms can either be posted into APHA or emailed to customer.registration@apha.gov.uk. If you require assistance with your poultry registration, APHA can be contacted by telephone on 03000 200 301; lines are open 08:30 to 17:00 Monday to Friday. You can also email the address above for assistance.

Changes to information (address, owner, occupier, species kept, purpose of keeping) or a change in numbers (plus or minus 20%) must be notified to APHA within 30 days of the change taking place, including ceasing to keep poultry (this does not include usual management fluctuations). After you have registered as a poultry keeper, these changes can be notified to APHA by email or telephone (see details above).

Fairs, markets, shows, exhibitions or other gatherings

Gatherings of poultry or captive birds at fairs, markets, shows, exhibitions or other events must be in accordance with any general licence issued by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). Licence conditions require the event organiser / licensee to comply with notification and biosecurity requirements and make a record of all people who bring poultry or other captive birds to a gathering or take such birds from a gathering. These records are to be kept for three months and must include the following information:

- full name
- home address and address where birds were kept prior to the event, if this is different
- telephone number
- number and types of birds exhibited
- a confirmation from entrants that they will comply with biosecurity arrangements
- a declaration that the birds exhibited have not, to the best of the owner's / keeper's knowledge:
    - been in contact with any birds infected with a notifiable avian disease
    - come from an avian disease control zone

Movement records of poultry and/or eggs

The Diseases of Poultry (England) Order 2003 requires every person:

- engaged in the transport or marketing of poultry or eggs (including a slaughterer or auctioneer) to keep a record in respect of any poultry or eggs transported or marketed
- who owns or keeps any flock of 250 or more poultry, consisting of any species on the premises, to keep a record of poultry entering or leaving those premises

'Poultry' is defined in the Order as "domestic fowls, turkeys, geese, ducks, guinea fowls, quails, pigeons, ratites and pheasants and partridges reared or kept in captivity for breeding, the production of meat or eggs for consumption or for restocking supplies of game".

Note: this is different to the definition in the Avian Influenza (Preventive Measures) (England) Regulations 2006 (see above).

Record details required:

- date and place poultry or eggs obtained
- species and description
- name and address of person from whom obtained
- date they left the premises
- name and address of person to whom they were transferred
- destination (if known)
- purpose for which they left the premises

Retention and production of records:

- records to be kept for 12 months from when dated as being marketed or transported
- records to be produced to an inspector at all reasonable times

Racing pigeons

Every person who owns or keeps racing pigeons must keep a record of every race or show for which they enter their pigeons.

Every racing pigeon entered for a race or show must be vaccinated against paramyxovirus 1 (the cause of Newcastle disease).

Control of *Salmonella*

Breeding and laying flocks / hatcheries

The Control of Salmonella in Poultry Order 2007 requires the occupier of a holding on which one or more breeding or laying flocks of at least 250 poultry of any single species are kept, and any occupier of a poultry hatchery with a total incubator capacity of 1,000 eggs or more, to notify Defra of its existence.

Definitions in the Order:

- 'poultry' is defined as "birds of the species *Gallus gallus*, turkey, ducks and geese"
- 'laying flock' is defined as "a flock of poultry kept for the production of eggs intended for human consumption"
- 'breeding flock' is defined as "a flock kept for the production of eggs intended for incubation"

In relation to the breeding or laying flocks of the species *Gallus gallus*, the Order requires:

- sampling for *Salmonella*
- prior notification to Defra of the arrival of breeding flocks (at least two weeks before the expected arrival date)
- notification two weeks prior to the movement to the laying phase and end of production cycle of breeding flocks
- record of movement and for samples for *Salmonella* movements

Sampling for *Salmonella* for breeding flocks must occur:

- when the birds are chicks
- when the birds are four weeks old
- two weeks before the date that the flock is moved to a laying unit, or (if they are not moved) the date they are expected to come into lay

- every second week during the laying period

Sampling for *Salmonella* for laying flocks must occur:

- when the birds are chicks
- two weeks before the date the flock is moved to a laying unit, or (if they are not moved) the date they are expected to come into lay
- every 15 weeks during the laying period, starting when the birds are between 22 and 26 weeks old

The occupier of premises must keep a record of the sample taken as follows:

- type of sample
- date sample taken
- identification of flock sampled
- age of flock sampled
- laboratory to which sample was sent
- result of any test on any sample

The above applies to breeding flocks (250 minimum) and to laying flocks, except those where all the eggs are for either:

- private domestic use
  or
- supplied in small quantities by the producer to the final consumer or to local retail shops

Record of movements

The occupier of premises must keep a record of the movement of domestic fowl and eggs (other than eggs for human consumption) on to and off holdings, as follows:

- date of movement
- whether the movement was on to or off the holding
- number of birds or eggs moved
- age of the birds moved
- if a whole flock is moved, the identification of that flock
- identity of the building(s) into or from which the birds or eggs were moved
- address of the holding of destination (for movements off) or the address of the holding of origin (for movements on)

Hatchery records

When eggs or chicks are moved on to or off the hatchery, the occupier must record the following:

- date of movement
- number of eggs or chicks moved
- whether the movement is on to or off the hatchery:
  - if the movement is off the hatchery, the holding destination
  - in the case of eggs brought on to the hatchery for incubation, the holding of origin

All records must be retained for two years and be produced to an inspector on demand.

Broiler and turkey flocks

The Control of Salmonella in Broiler Flocks Order 2009 requires the occupier of the holding on which one or more broiler flocks are kept to notify Defra of this information within three months of the establishment of the holding, and to sample for *Salmonella*.

'Broiler flock' is defined in the Order as "a flock kept for the production of meat intended for human consumption".

The Control of Salmonella in Turkey Flocks Order 2009 requires the occupier of the holding on which one or more turkey flocks are kept to notify APHA within three months of the establishment of the holding and to sample for *Salmonella*. The occupier must notify APHA, at least two weeks before, of the expected date of arrival at the holding of every turkey flock.

'Turkey flock' is defined in the Order as:

"(a) a flock of more than 250 turkeys kept for breeding;
(b) a flock of more than 500 turkeys kept for the production of meat intended for human consumption unless:
(i) less than 10,000 individual turkeys are kept in any 12 month period at the holding where the flock is found, and
(ii) all the meat is supplied to the final consumer or to local retail establishments."

Records of *Salmonella* samples taken must be kept as follows:

- type of sample taken
- date on which the sample was taken
- where there is more than one flock on the holding, the identification of the flock from which the sample was taken
- age of the flock sampled
- laboratory to which the sample was sent
- intended date of slaughter of the flock sampled
- results of tests

When birds are moved on to or off the holding, the occupier must record:

- the date of the movement
- whether the movement was on to or off the holding
- number of birds moved
- age of birds moved
- when the movement involves an entire flock, and there is more than one flock on the holding, the identification of that flock
- the identity of the building or group of buildings into or from which the birds were moved
- the address of the holding that they came from or the slaughterhouse or holding they were sent to

All records must be retained for two years and be produced to an inspector on demand.

Code of practice

APHA has produced a code of practice for the control of *Salmonella* in animal feed in Great Britain.

Transport records

The Welfare of Animals (Transport) (England) Order 2006 requires poultry that are transported to be accompanied by an animal transport certificate (ATC) showing the:

- origin and ownership of the poultry
- place of departure
- date and time of departure
- intended place of destination
- expected duration of the intended journey

Note: transport records are not required for transport of poultry:

- that does not take place in connection with an economic activity
- to and from veterinary practices
- by farmers of their own birds and in their own means of transport for a distance of less than 50 km from their holding (31.07 miles)

Records must be retained for six months and be produced to an inspector on demand.

Further information on the documentation required to transport poultry, including transporter authorisations and certificates of competence, can be found in 'Transporting animals by road'.

Farm records

The Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2007 require a person responsible for farmed animals (animals bred or kept for the production of food, wool, skin or other farming purposes) to maintain a record of the number of mortalities found on each inspection, which must be at least once a day.

These records must be kept for three years and made available to an inspector on request.

Medicine records

The Veterinary Medicines Regulations 2013 require keepers of food-producing animals to keep a record of:

- proof of purchase of veterinary medicines:
  - name of product and batch number
  - quantity purchased
  - name and address of supplier
  - date of acquisition
- administration:
  - name of product
  - date of administration
  - quantity administered
  - withdrawal period
  - identification of animals treated
- disposal:
  - date of disposal
  - quantity of the product involved
  - how and where it was disposed of

If the product is administered by a vet, they must either complete the record or provide written details and

the keeper must then complete the records. Records - including proof of purchase - must be kept for five years and be produced to an inspector on demand.

Further information on the record-keeping requirements in relation to the purchasing, administration and disposal of veterinary medicines can be found in 'Keeping veterinary medicine records'.

Food business records

The Food Safety and Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013 and assimilated Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 *on the hygiene of foodstuffs* require food business operators to keep and maintain records relating to measures put in place to control hazards. In particular, those rearing animals or producing primary products of animal origin must keep records that include:

- the nature and origin of feed fed to the animals
- veterinary medicinal products or other treatments administered to the animals, dates of administration and withdrawal periods
- the results of any analysis carried out on samples taken from animals or other samples taken for diagnostic purposes that have importance for human health
- any relevant reports or checks carried out on animals or products of animal origin
- the occurrence of diseases that may affect the safety of the meat

These records are to be made available to an inspector and receiving food business operators, on request.

Other persons - such as veterinarians, agronomists and farm technicians - may assist food business operators with the keeping of records.

Trading Standards

For more information on the work of Trading Standards services - and the possible consequences of not abiding by the law - please see 'Trading Standards: powers, enforcement and penalties'.

In addition to the information covered in the above guide, under some legislation, where a person is found not to be complying with a notice, the enforcing authority may arrange for the notice to be complied with and the person will be liable for any costs incurred.

In this update

Link added to APHA code of practice for the control of *Salmonella* in animal feed in Great Britain.

Last reviewed / updated: July 2025

Key legislation

- Animal Health Act 1981
- Diseases of Poultry (England) Order 2003
- assimilated Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 *on the hygiene of foodstuffs*
- Avian Influenza (Preventive Measures) (England) Regulations 2006
- Welfare of Animals (Transport) (England) Order 2006

- Control of Salmonella in Poultry Order 2007
- Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2007
- Control of Salmonella in Broiler Flocks Order 2009
- Control of Salmonella in Turkey Flocks Order 2009
- Food Safety and Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013
- Veterinary Medicines Regulations 2013

Please note

This information is intended for guidance; only the courts can give an authoritative interpretation of the law.

The guide's 'Key legislation' links go to the legislation.gov.uk website. The site usually updates the legislation to include any amendments made to it. However, this is not always the case. Information on all changes made to legislation can be found by following the above links and clicking on the 'More Resources' tab.

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