Defra Wild Bird Mortality (unusual mortality events) Survey

Guidelines for reporting unusual mortality events to Defra

Background

These guidelines (and related issues) were discussed at an ad-hoc meeting of the Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens on 28 November 2005. Further details of this meeting may be found at: www.advisorybodies.doh.gov.uk/acdp/publications.htm#acpd

Who these guidelines are for

Members of the public should not handle wild animal carcases unless it is essential to do so. If you have to handle dead wild birds, follow the guidance below on safe handling. If you have received instruction on handling carcases or live animals as part of your job or pastime activities and you have suitable equipment readily available (bags, gloves and washing facilities), you may wish to do so on a voluntary basis having discussed the issue with Defra officials. If so you should follow the guidance below on handling dead birds.

Reasons for the survey

Defra are interested in monitoring unusual mortality events or ‘die-off’ in wild birds (unusually high mortality in wild birds in relation to the population size in the area concerned; single or multiple deaths of swans are of interest). A number of factors may be responsible for causing a die-off including infectious diseases, adverse weather conditions, poisoning, predation and starvation. This survey is particularly concerned with infectious diseases. The survey has been in operation since 1998, but has been amended recently to take account of the increased risk of importation of avian influenza into GB in wild birds.

What to do if you come across a multiple die-off

If you think you have come across an unusual mortality event in wild birds, including single or multiple deaths of swans, please contact the Defra helpline 08459 33 55 77. The helpline will take details and if the incident fits with the survey requirements will pass you on to the nearest Veterinary Laboratory Agencies (VLA) Regional Laboratory in England and Wales or the nearest Scottish Agricultural College (SAC) Laboratory in Scotland during normal office hours. At other times you will be passed to the State Veterinary Service. A list of VLA and SAC laboratories is provided below.

When contacting the Defra Helpline please have as much information to hand as possible so that an initial assessment of the die-off can be made.

If you are passed on to a veterinary laboratory, they will decide whether examination of the carcases described is required and how they will be
collected whether collection of the carcases by a representative from the Rural Development Service (RDS), State Veterinary Service (SVS) is required.

**Important guidance for handling dead wild birds**

You may prefer to take the carcases to the nearest laboratory yourself. In this case you should indicate this to the laboratory representative. You **must** follow the general guidelines below in order to minimise the risk of infection.

Wild birds can carry several diseases that are infectious to people. To minimise the risk of infection, it is important to take simple hygienic precautions when handling the dead birds or any contaminated material.

1. Wear disposable protective gloves when picking up and handling the carcase (not latex).
2. Place the carcase in a suitable leak proof plastic bag, and care should be taken not to contaminate the outside of this bag.
3. Seal the bag and place it in a second plastic bag.
4. Remove gloves by turning them inside out and then place them in the second plastic bag or in a separate plastic bag that should be sealed.
5. The second plastic bag should be sealed and remain sealed, without any leakage, for the journey to the VLA RL.
6. Wash the outside of the second plastic bag with soap and water or disinfectant.
7. If gloves are not available, a bag can be turned inside out and used as a makeshift glove, when the dead bird has been picked up, the bag can be reverted and sealed. This should then be placed in a second plastic bag, which should be sealed and washed (as above).

8. **Wash your hands, nails and forearms thoroughly with soap and water after handling the carcase and do not to handle any food until this has been done.**

Carcases should be double bagged in sealed waterproof plastic bags for transporting and the basic hygiene precautions set out below should be followed.

If there is obvious soiling of clothing, this should be physically cleaned and washed with soap and water.

To avoid contamination of any vehicle used, it is recommended that the bagged carcase is also placed on a plastic sheet.

Any contamination of your vehicle should be cleaned with soap or disinfectant.

**DO NOT** place dead bird carcases in the freezer.
DO NOT leave dead bird carcases lying around.

Keep children away from dead bird carcases.

The laboratory will dispose of any contaminated materials.

You will not be charged any laboratory fees.

The examination may include a post mortem examination and where appropriate samples will be sent for further tests. The aim is to find the cause of the death. Sometimes it is not possible to find the exact cause of death and it is common to suggest a number of causes, these are called differential diagnoses.

The person or organisation submitting the carcases will be informed of positive results.
## CONTACT DETAILS

### DURING NORMAL WORKING HOURS

#### ENGLAND AND WALES: VLA REGIONAL LABORATORIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Laboratory</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Contact Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>VLA Aberystwyth</strong></td>
<td>Y Buarth, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion, SY23 1ND</td>
<td>Tel: 01970 61374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VLA Penrith</strong></td>
<td>Merrythought, Calthwaite, Penrith, Cumbria, CA11 9RR</td>
<td>Tel: 01768 885295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VLA Bury St Edmunds</strong></td>
<td>Rougham Hill, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP33 2RX</td>
<td>Tel: 01284 724499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VLA Preston</strong></td>
<td>Barton Hall, Garstang Road, Barton, Preston, Lancs PR3 5HE</td>
<td>Tel: 01772 861611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VLA Carmarthen</strong></td>
<td>Job's Well Road, Johnstown, Carmarthen, SA31 3EZ</td>
<td>Tel: 01267 235244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VLA Shrewsbury</strong></td>
<td>Kendal Road, Harlescott, Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY1 4HD</td>
<td>Tel: 01743 467621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VLA Langford</strong></td>
<td>Langford House, Langford, Bristol BS40 5DX</td>
<td>Tel: 01934 852421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VLA Starcross</strong></td>
<td>Staplake Mount, Starcross, Exeter, Devon EX6 8PE</td>
<td>Tel: 01626 891121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VLA Luddington</strong></td>
<td>Luddington, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire CV37 9SJ</td>
<td>Tel: 01789 750212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VLA Sutton Bonington</strong></td>
<td>The Elms, College Road, Sutton Bonington, Loughborough, Leics LE12 5RB</td>
<td>Tel: 01509 672332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VLA Newcastle</strong></td>
<td>Whitley Road, Longbenton, Newcastle upon Tyne NE12 9SE</td>
<td>Tel: 0191 266 2292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VLA Thirsk</strong></td>
<td>West House, Station Road, Thirsk, N. Yorkshire YO7 1PZ</td>
<td>Tel: 01845 522065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VLA Winchester</strong></td>
<td>Itchen Abbas, Winchester, Hants SO21 1BX</td>
<td>Tel: 01962 779966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VLA Truro</strong></td>
<td>Polwhele, Truro, Cornwall TR4 9AD</td>
<td>Tel: 01872 272150</td>
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</table>

#### SCOTLAND: SCOTTISH AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE (SAC) VETERINARY SERVICE DISEASE SURVEILLANCE CENTRES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Contact Details</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Edinburgh</strong></td>
<td>SAC Veterinary Services, Allan Watt Building Bush Estate, Penicuik, Midlothian, EH26 0QE</td>
<td>Tel: 0131 535 3139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. Dumfries</strong></td>
<td>SAC Veterinary Services, St Mary’s Industrial Estate Dumfries, DG1 1DX</td>
<td>Tel: 01387 267260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Perth</td>
<td>6. Aberdeen</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
|   | SAC Veterinary Services, 5, Bertha Park View  
Perth, PH1 3FZ  
Tel: 01738 629167 | SAC Veterinary Services, Mill of Craibstone, Bucksburn, Aberdeen, AB2 9TS  
Tel: 01224 711177 |
|   | 3. St Boswells              | 7. Inverness                 |
|   | SAC Veterinary Services, Greycrook, St Boswells, TD6 0EU  
Tel: 01835 822456 | SAC Veterinary Services, Drummondhill, Stratherrick Road, Inverness, IV2 4JZ  
Tel: 01463 243030 |
|   | 4. Ayr                      | 8. Thurso                    |
|   | SAC Veterinary Services, Auchincruive, Ayr, KA6 5AE  
Tel: 01292 520318 | SAC Veterinary Services, Janetstown, Thurso  
KW14 7XF  
Tel: 01847 892602 |
<table>
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<th>Telephone</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ayr</td>
<td>Russell House, King Street, Ayr KA8 OBE</td>
<td>01292 268525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leeds</td>
<td>Veterinary Service, Government Buildings, Otley Road, Leeds LS16 5PZ</td>
<td>0113 230 0100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bury St Edmunds</td>
<td>Southgate, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 2BD</td>
<td>01284 778150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leicester</td>
<td>Saffron House, Tigers Road, Wigston, Leicester LE18 4UY</td>
<td>0116 2787451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caernarfon</td>
<td>North Wales Animal Health Division, Crown Building, Penrallt, Caernarfon, Gwynedd LL55 1EP</td>
<td>01286 674144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln</td>
<td>Ceres House, No 2 Searby Road, Lincoln LN2 4DT</td>
<td>01522 529951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardiff</td>
<td>Animal Health Unit, Government Buildings, 66 Ty Glas Road, Llanishen, Cardiff CF14 5ZB</td>
<td>0129 20 768500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle upon Tyne</td>
<td>The Quadrant, Newburn Riverside, Newcastle upon Tyne NE15 8NZ</td>
<td>0191 2295400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carlisle</td>
<td>Animal Health Division, Hadrian House, Wavell Dr. Rosehill Industrial Est, Carlisle CA1 2TB</td>
<td>01228 591999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perth</td>
<td>Animal Health Divisional Office, Central Scotland, SEERAD, Strathearn House, Broxden Business Park, Perth PH1 1RX</td>
<td>01738 602211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmarthen</td>
<td>Government Buildings, Picton Terrace, Carmarthen SA31 3BT</td>
<td>01267 225300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preston</td>
<td>Barton Hall Garstang Road, Barton, Preston PR3 5HE</td>
<td>01772 861144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chelmsford</td>
<td>Animal Health Division, Beeches Road, Chelmsford, CM1 2RU</td>
<td>01245 358383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Animal Health, Divisional Office, Coley Park, Reading RG1 6LY</td>
<td>0118 9596695</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exeter</td>
<td>Animal Health Division, Clyst House, Winslade Park, Clyst St Mary, Exeter, Devon EX5 1DY</td>
<td>01392 266373</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reigate</td>
<td>Liberty House, 105 Bell Street, Reigate, Surrey RH2 7JB</td>
<td>01737 242242</td>
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<tr>
<td>Galashiels</td>
<td>Cotgrean Road, Tweedbank, Galashiels TD1 3SG</td>
<td>01896 758806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stafford</td>
<td>State Veterinary Service, Beacon House, Staffordshire Technology Park, Dyson Way, Stafford ST18 0AR</td>
<td>01785 231900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloucester</td>
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<td>Taunton</td>
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<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Address</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defra Animal Health Divisional Office, Saw Mills End, Corinium Avenue, Gloucester GL4 3DE</td>
<td>Telephone: 01452 627400</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Third, fourth and Fifth Floors, Quantock House, Paul Street, Taunton TA1 3NX</td>
<td>Telephone 01823 337922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inverness</td>
<td>Longman House, 28 Longman Road, Inverness IV1 1SF</td>
<td>Telephone: 01463 253098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truro</td>
<td>Animal Health Division, Pydar House, Pydar Street, Truro, Cornwall, TR1 2XD</td>
<td>Telephone: 01872 265500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inverurie</td>
<td>Thainstone Court, Inverurie, Aberdeenshire, AB51 5YA</td>
<td>Telephone: 01467 626300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worcester</td>
<td>Block G, Government Buildings, Whittington Road, Worcester WR5 2LQ</td>
<td>Telephone: 01905 767111</td>
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Veterinary Exotic Diseases Division, 11th October 2005