

Omlet's White Paper on Avian Flu

26th August 2005

Most of the time keeping chickens is a huge amount of fun but every now and again something pops up which sounds a bit worrying. Avian influenza (sometimes called bird flu) is in the news at the moment because there have been cases recently in the Far East and Russia.

Could Bird flu occur in the UK?

Bird flu is not present in the UK or Europe. The last case was in 1992 on a turkey farm in East Anglia. It was contained to just this one farm and there haven't been any cases since. The UK has extremely strict rules on the movement of livestock; any occurrences of the disease have to be notified by law so that it can be contained quickly.

Could it affect my chickens?

It is highly unlikely that chickens kept in a back garden could catch bird flu. The main concern is that it could affect large flocks on commercial farms.

What is being done about this?

The European Union has acted quickly to ban imports of all animals capable of carrying the disease from infected countries. The Netherlands has been badly affected in the past and so the Government there has also instructed its farmers to keep flocks indoors as this effectively limits the risk of infection from wild birds. It is reassuring that governments have taken measures long before the disease has got anywhere close to our borders.

How do Omlet keep their chickens safe?

We use a couple of the countries finest and most established suppliers of chickens. The farms are dedicated to the rearing of chickens of the highest quality and as such they are kept in clean, well insulated barns. Because of the extensive vaccination programme the growing chickens have to be kept inside and therefore the chance of them coming into contact with birds carrying the disease is nil.

What can I do about it?

According to the Department of the Environment and Farming the risk is extremely small and they are monitoring the situation very closely. Should any special action be required we will let our customers know about it immediately. In the meantime normal hygiene rules apply! You can use a pet disinfectant to clean the eglu, food and water containers regularly to ensure that they are as hygienic as possible.

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