

The Joint Response of the CC and NCA Committees to the DEFRA Consultation on the
Registration of Bird Keepers.

Considering avian influenza's threat to the national poultry flock and now possibly human life, the Government is seeking to control its spread and transmission. DEFRA proposes that bird keeper registration will help to achieve this. The committees of the Canary Council and National Council for Aviculture accept the case for registration of owners of poultry and similarly vulnerable species but **not all birdkeepers**.

The risk of infection is considerably reduced by housing and bio-securing poultry flocks, and this is an effective procedure for poultry during an outbreak.

Cage and aviary birds of the hobbyist and exhibition kind are almost all domestically housed in dedicated bird rooms offering no access to wild birds and subject to biosecurity measures. Therefore, low to no risk.

The birds are boxed when travelling to and from shows and have no contact with wild birds whilst at the shows. Therefore, low to no risk.

There is no evidence of avian flu transmission having occurred at or because of a bird show or from a hobbyist bird room. No obvious need for registration, then.

Registration and subsequent annual updates via internet access is bureaucratic and problematic for many of our members in the older age group. Similarly, contacting them via text to warn of outbreaks and recommended action assumes they all use mobile 'phones - many don't. The bureaucracy and hassle is a disincentive to comply and ultimately even a reason to give up their hobby.

We question the necessity, practicality, efficacy and cost of registration and inspection of all bird keepers' premises and our members naturally fear the potential culling of their uncontaminated, housed, and protected birds in an outbreak area.

Should there be inspections, who will carry them out? Government inspectors? Local Authority inspectors? Outsourced private companies? With what training and with what powers? How will they be funded and by whom?

These issues need to be discussed and resolved with DEFRA before we could accept such a scheme, assuming it is necessary at all, and we shall be saying so when completing our on-line questionnaire.

Our advice to members in the meantime is write to your MP to express your concerns and, for those who can, express those concerns in your on-line questionnaire. Until we have satisfactory answers vote for: **Do Nothing** (no change to current registration requirements).

Barry Mills, Chairman, The Canary Council, The National Council for Aviculture.