



Statement on Rowing and Bird/Avian Flu

Think twice before putting your hand down to push off.

The deadly strain, H5N1, does not pass easily from birds to people, however the waterways used by UK rowers are a haven for wildlife, in particular migrating birds, and rowers should take note of the following;

Bird flu is a highly infectious disease affecting many species of birds including migratory wildfowl. It is spread by the movement of infected birds or, more relevant to rowers, contact with their secretions, particularly faeces, either directly or through contaminated objects, clothes or vehicles.

What measures should rowers take?

Echoing the guidance notes in the ARA Water Safety code (under waterborne diseases) high standards of personal hygiene will help prevent ingestion and inhalation of infective material and reduce the risk of transmission to others. Thorough washing with soap and water is an effective method of decontamination and may usefully be enhanced by the use of disinfectant.

What measures should clubs take?

All equipment that has been used on the water should be cleaned after use and, where possible and practical, regularly wash down landing stages, pontoons and places that boats launch from. Do not encourage birds to the area by feeding them.

All rowers should avoid handling obviously sick or diseased birds and think twice before you put your hand down to push off.

All dead birds found in a Wild Bird Risk Area should be reported to the Defra Helpline (08459 33 55 77) - Monday -Friday 6.00am to 10.00pm and Saturday-Sunday 6.00am to 10.00pm. In the rest of the country, if you find one or more dead swan(s)/ wild fowl (ducks and geese); more than 3 dead birds of the same species or more than 5 dead birds of different species, in the same place, you should contact the Defra Helpline. You will be asked for details of your finding and its location.

More information is available from the Defra website (www.defra.gov.uk)