



British Egg Industry Council

22nd February 2017

To: BEIC Subscribers

Lion Code – Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ) and egg pack labelling

A meeting of BEIC Subscribers was held on 21st February 2017 to discuss the current AI situation.

It was noted that the UK has the largest free range flock in Europe (19.3 million hens) and is proud of the high standards of British free range farms. Under normal circumstances birds are encouraged to range outside freely, by planting trees and providing other shelter.

There was widespread concern over the different approaches being taken by authorities in different parts of the UK following their announcements made earlier in February for an amended AIPZ (from 28th February until 30th April 2017), which presents a risk both to the health of hens and to the future of free range egg production. The situation whereby some producers could decide to let their birds out in order to maintain their free range status, while others are unable to, or are unwilling to risk the health of their hens, could compromise both animal health and consumer confidence.

BEIC is aware that there are many egg producers and their veterinary advisors who are concerned that the current risk from AI in wild birds is still too great to recommend allowing birds access to the range at this time, and that the additional biosecurity measures required are impractical for many farms.

BEIC therefore believes that many free range hens are likely to need to be kept inside in barns for a further eight weeks, to protect them from AI, following concerns about the practicality of the new requirements.

BEIC members therefore plan to label all free range eggs, indicating that the hens are currently being kept inside, to ensure both that individual producers are not penalised if veterinary advice is for their hens to remain inside to ensure their health, and that consumers are not confused by what they could perceive to be inconsistent labelling.

From 1st March until 30th April 2017, all BEIC members' free range packs will have stickers on saying that the eggs have been laid by hens currently kept in barns. There will also be signs near where eggs are sold highlighting this and a website has been set up – www.freerangeinfo.com – for further information for consumers.

BEIC has asked the Government, to allow free range hens access to a more limited ranging area during a time of heightened disease risk that could be covered to protect

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them from wild birds which spread AI. This would enable all producers to allow their birds outside and retain their 'free range' status, but with reduced risk of disease.

BEIC