

A portrait of Ed Nottingham, a man with short brown hair and a light blue shirt, smiling. The background is a blurred blue and white pattern.

## MANAGING THE RISKS OF AN AVIAN INFLUENZA OUTBREAK

### As AI threatens this winter, how can producers be prepared to handle a potential outbreak?

The last month has seen cases of AI appearing on sites across the UK, from as far north as Yorkshire all the way down to Kent. A national prevention order was declared by DEFRA on 11th November, meaning producers are now following strict biosecurity measures, and a housing order looks imminent.

It is clearly a time for producers to be particularly vigilant, many will be looking at the prevention measures they have on their farm and assessing what contingency plans are in place should the worst happen. So, how can you prepare?

#### **BFREPA Insurance Policy**

Insurance is essential. Most BFREPA members

will already be aware of the policy that comes with their membership. It was put together by BFREPA, working with brokers Scrutton Bland, and offers some insurance against the risks posed by AI and Newcastle Disease, focusing particularly on the costs of secondary cleansing and disinfection.

All members can benefit from this and it can provide up to £50,000 worth of cover per producer in the event of DEFRA ordering a slaughter, however there is a total limit of £1 million, so it is available on a first come first served basis.

Ed Nottingham is head of agricultural insurance at Scrutton Bland and set up this policy with BFREPA, he told us that it is

unlikely that the £1 million limit would be reached.

‘We think that by the twenty-first producer to claim, the money might run out, I don’t think it is very likely that we would get that many outbreaks in free range hens, but you can never rule it out.’

### Individual Insurance Policies

Ed says that producers should not just rely on the BFREPA policy. ‘It does not replace individual policies’, he says. ‘What it is maybe sensible to do is to take an educated gamble that you could insure less against secondary cleansing and disinfection because you anticipate taking a chunk of money out of the BFREPA pot.’

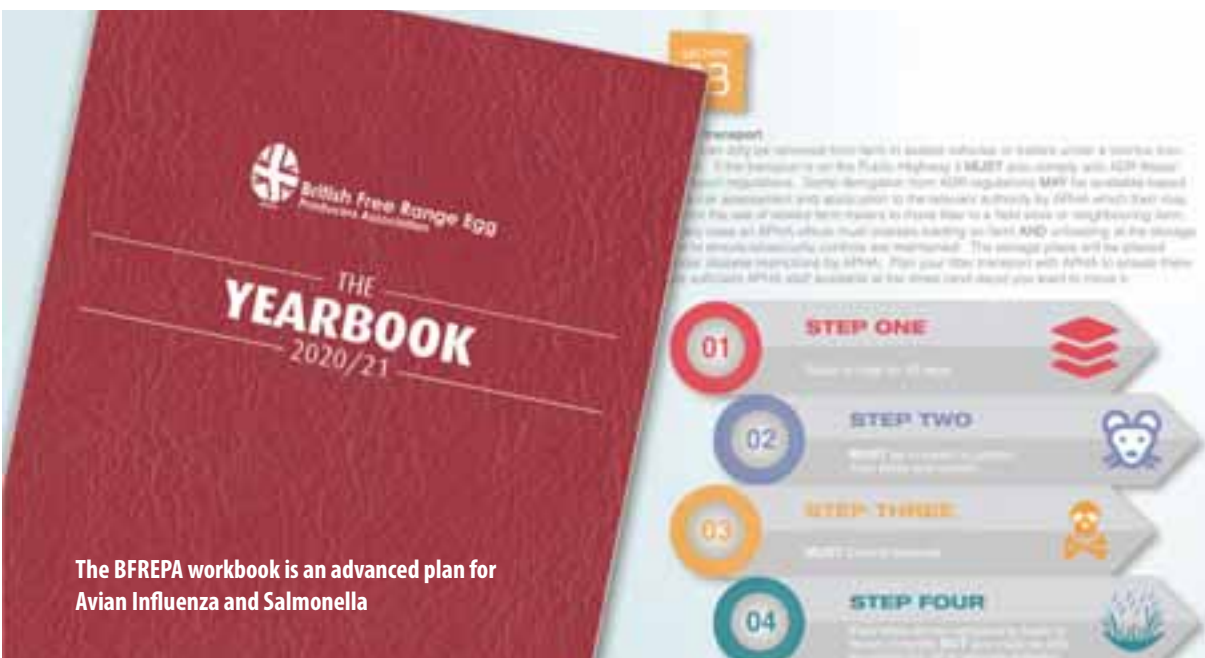
According to Ed, around a third of BFREPA members do currently have an individual policy with Scrutton Bland, but he notes that each policy varies on a farm to farm basis. He says, ‘insurance is very much elective, people will only insure against what they believe their business cannot stand’

This variability comes from exactly what people want to insure against and what triggers their policy.

‘It is not a carte blanche’, he says. ‘A trigger could be a notification of slaughter from DEFRA, and that is what triggers the BFREPA policy, but there are others, our trigger is usually when you are placed under suspicion of having AI. That brings things forward in terms of time. H5 and H7 are the two strains which require slaughter but there are many non-notifiable strains which makes the process of claiming very difficult when your trigger is notification to slaughter.’

### BFREPA Workbook

Ed is keen to stress that insurance policies are not a magic answer to the risks of AI. Instead he suggests they sit hand in glove with the workbook created by BFREPA and Livetec to help producers manage the risks of infection. Many members will be familiar with this document which puts into place the necessary contingency plans for a possible outbreak.



The BFREPA workbook is an advanced plan for Avian Influenza and Salmonella

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If you want to do it right, the workbook and the insurance go together', Ed told us. 'It poses difficult questions about your business and really makes people think. Actually buying a policy is probably the easy option. This publication instills readiness in people for when something does go wrong'.

Julian Sparrey is technical director of Livetec, a company that specialises in the slaughter and clean up operations on infected sites and puts contingency plans in place for producers, he also helped to write the workbook with BFREPA. He says that a major problem for infected farmers can be the period between the end of DEFRA culling the birds and the actual physical start of secondary cleansing and disinfection.

'This is taking people 7-14 days' he told us. 'That is a big problem if you are close to getting a new flock in. If that is the case, then you need to get your farm turned around as quickly as possible. Therefore, if you have the workbook filled in, you will already have a contingency plan in place, which will make it a much quicker process to get your protocols for secondary cleansing and disinfection signed off by Animal Health and the Environment Agency. This way the process of secondary cleaning and disinfection can start much sooner'

What else should producers be prepared for? Julian suggests that there are several other costs related to cleansing and disinfection that producers need to be aware of. He says, 'A lot of people don't have a grip of what is actually involved in cleaning up. If you are on a multi-tiered system or only normally do a dry clean, then you are going to have to do a wet clean to get permission to restock. So people need a plan in place as to how they will do that with all their multi-tier equipment in there'.

Disposal of litter can also pose more difficulties than people are sometimes aware of.

Julian told us that 'when you are under AI restrictions you could have at least two weeks extra muck to get rid of. You cannot just send it off as usual, it either has to be stored on the farm for 42 days or it can be sent away for rendering which can cost as much as £100 a tonne. This is yet another cost to deal with and is perhaps somewhere producers might want to consider insurance'.

### **What should producers be doing now?**

The current situation should not be taken lightly, according to Julian, and producers should be taking extra measures to prevent the spread of AI.

'What producers should be doing right now is locking the gate', he says. 'The only thing that should be coming onto the farm at the minute is the lorries delivering feed and collecting eggs. It is difficult on farms where this is not the only business going on, but look at the way the farm is set up so that these lorries are the only thing that gets near the sheds. Be thorough in cleaning the area where the lorry is unloaded and the pallets that come with it. There is no telling where these lorries have been'.

He also stresses the dangers of wet areas, 'AI can stay in water for two to three months, if there are wild bird faeces in that then you can transfer the virus from it. It is important to clean your boots when you come off of the range because so often we are finding that it is people that are carrying it around. They pick it up, take it into their car, and drive it onto another premises'.