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Press release

Precautionary measures against bird flu at Zoo and Tierpark

Move indoors to winter aviaries moved forward

On 8 November, the first case of H5N8 bird flu virus was confirmed in Germany, with several wild birds being found dead. On 15 November, the Lichtenberg district office ordered all poultry owners to house their birds indoors. The Berlin-Mitte district office followed suit on 16 November. The purpose of ordering the birds indoors is to stop contact with wild birds that may already be infected.

Zoo and Tierpark Berlin already started moving their birds indoors last week as a precautionary measure after the first cases of bird flu were confirmed in Germany. In many instances, the move coincided with the usual seasonal relocation of the birds to their winter aviaries.

As this is not the first instance of bird flu, the precautionary measures are already routine at the Zoo and the Tierpark. Each facility has its own emergency plan that is adapted to the specific conditions and number of birds in each case. The plan sets out exactly where to take which birds and divides the parks into different sections. The plan also includes the procedures to be followed if an infection is confirmed, incorporating a range of different scenarios.

Birds in zoos are kept in separate areas without any direct contact – not in a big group like in large poultry farms. For this reason, not all birds would necessarily have to be killed if a case of bird flu were confirmed, as is general practice in intensive poultry farming. This decision is taken on a case-by-case basis by the official veterinarian responsible.

The Zoo's World of Birds and pheasantry are consequently temporarily closed to visitors, and birds like pelicans, penguins and flamingos are currently not on display.

The birds that can still be seen outside on the ponds and elsewhere, such as ducks and grey heron, are mainly free-flying wild birds that are not under the control of the Zoo and the Tierpark.

Zoo and Tierpark Director Dr Andreas Knieriem reassures visitors: "We are of course taking the official directive very seriously and are trying to house all birds indoors as best we can." Fortunately, humans are not at risk from the disease, so there is no danger for Zoo and Tierpark visitors."