

GENERAL LICENSING (GAMEBIRDS) FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS JUNE 2024

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The application process for an individual licence for next season

*Please note that gamebird references within this FAQ relate to common pheasant and red-legged partridge only.

Which gamebird* releases will be covered by GL43 in 2024?

Gamebird release activity which takes place only on a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) or within its 500m buffer zone in England will continue to be covered by the GL43 licence, which expires on 1st February 2025. You must **not** release gamebirds on a SAC or within its buffer zone under GL43 if the site is also designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA) or is within the buffer zone of a SPA.

Can I release gamebirds on a Special Protection Area (SPA) in 2024?

The modified general licence 45 (GL45) covering gamebird release on or within 500m of SPAs has now been published on GOV.UK. Please follow this link to find out which SPAs are covered by the modified GL45 [Gamebirds: licence to release common pheasants or red-legged partridges on specified special protection areas or within 500m of their boundary \(GL45\)](#) licence. If you intend to use GL45, please ensure that you can comply with all the conditions.

What do I do if I cannot meet the conditions of the modified GL45?

If you are unable to comply with the conditions of the modified GL45, you can apply to Defra for an individual licence by contacting GLEnquiries@defra.gov.uk.

You will need to apply for an individual licence to release gamebirds on or within 500m of a SPA that is not listed in the modified GL45, or you cannot comply with the conditions in the modified GL45. You can apply for an individual licence via this email address: GLEnquiries@defra.gov.uk and advice on how best to apply for an application can be found here: [Gamebirds: licences to release them - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

How can I tell if my gamebird release would take place within a SPA or its buffer zone?

Magic Maps is a publicly accessible mapping tool that can be used to view protected areas, their boundaries, and 500m buffer zones can be viewed on ArcGIS maps. To find out if your gamebird release would take place within a SPA or its buffer zone go to [\(ADD NEW LINK\)](#) for instructions.

I have applied for an individual licence, now that the modified GL45 has been published what do I need to do?

Provided you can satisfy yourself that you can comply with the all the conditions of the modified GL45, you may not need an individual licence.

Please check the modified GL45 [Gamebirds: licence to release common pheasants or red-legged partridges on specified special protection areas or within 500m of their boundary \(GL45\)](#) and inform us as soon as possible, if you would like Defra to discontinue processing your individual licence application, because the release activity can be covered by the modified GL45, or whether you need Defra to continue to process the application. Please advised that until we hear from you the application will be placed on hold.

What are the density thresholds in the modified GL45?

Any gamebird release activity on or within the buffer of SPAs in 2024 will be subject to the same maximum thresholds as in 2023. This applies a maximum threshold of 700 birds per hectare of release pen in the SPA and 1000 birds per hectare of release pen in the buffer zone.

When does a vet inspection have to take place?

Condition 4 of the modified GL45 requires there to be a vet inspection of all gamebirds to be released and other birds held in the same release pen or release area within the 24 hours before release. You cannot rely on the modified GL45 if you are unable to comply with the conditions of the licence.

How do I meet the requirements of condition 4

If the vet inspection takes place at the game farm, and the birds are placed into the release pen within 24 hours, and do not mix with any other birds before being placed into the release pen at the shoot, then this will meet the requirements of condition 4 of the modified GL45 (provided you comply with any other relevant elements of this condition). The date of release will be considered the date the birds are placed into the release pen at the shoot.

How will Defra monitor / enforce compliance of the conditions of individual licences?

We will undertake targeted inspections of gamebird release sites to monitor compliance with relevant conditions. If you believe you have witnessed unlicensed gamebird releases taking place you should report that to your local police by calling 101 or call Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

GL45

Will you be updating the GL when the poultry register requirements change in Oct?

We will consider whether the modified GL45 will require an update once the changes to the poultry registration come into force on 1 October 2024. Currently, if you keep 50 or more birds,

you are required to register as a keeper on the poultry register, using the compulsory registration form, within one month of keeping 50 or more birds on your premises. Please refer to the link provided in the modified GL45 as follows: [Gamebirds: licence to release common pheasants or red-legged partridges on specified special protection areas or within 500m of their boundary \(GL45\)](#). This does apply to keeping 50 or more gamebirds; however, registration on the poultry register is a legal requirement under the following regulation: [The Avian Influenza \(Preventive Measures\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

Are there any delayed release dates on GL45?

Condition 7 specifies a delayed release date of 7th September for the release of common pheasants and red-legged partridge on Northumberland Marine SPA. This applies to the SPA and 500m buffer zone. Delayed releases are not required for gamebird releases on any other SPAs named in GL45.

What do the reporting requirements mean for me?

The reporting requirements are set out in condition 3 of the modified GL45.

I had an individual licence last year - does the licence roll over?

No. Individual gamebird licences granted in 2023 do not roll over to permit releases in 2024. If the SPA that you plan to release on is named on the modified GL45 you can release gamebirds under modified GL45 provided that you comply fully with the modified GL45 conditions. If the SPA that you plan to release on is not named on the modified GL45 or you are not able to comply with the conditions of the modified GL45 you will need to apply for a new individual licence to release gamebirds on or within 500m of an SPA in 2024.

Consultation on changes to gamebird release policy

Did you consult the gamebird sector and shooting communities before making changes to the approach to gamebird release licencing for 2024?

We have engaged with a range of representatives from the shooting sector and environmental non-governmental organisations (eNGOs) with an interest in gamebird release, encouraging these stakeholders to share evidence and suggestions for the approach to gamebird release licencing. We aim to continue this engagement throughout the 2024 season.

Information sharing

Can I request access to all documentation relating to my individual licence application including how the decision was made?

If you would like to request access to the documentation relating to your own application, please contact GLEnquiries@defra.gov.uk.

Can I request information about the decisions made for any application?

Yes, you can. If you want to request information about the decisions made for applications, for which you were not the applicant, you can make a EIR / FOI request via the Defra helpline -

helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk. Please note that we will assess requests and apply exemptions / redactions on a case-by-case basis.

Avian Influenza

Did you update your evidence base / risk assessment before making licensing decisions for the 2024 season?

Yes, we gathered additional information regarding the detailed distribution of qualifying species on SPAs to make effective decisions and to be able process applications quickly and efficiently. We have carried out workshops with HPAI/avian disease experts and sector stakeholders/avian behaviour experts to try to improve our assessment of risk at the site level as well as how best, and to what extent, this risk can be managed. We will draw on the best available information to inform licencing decisions in 2024.

What happens if the national risk level goes up?

The national risk level is continually reviewed by the UK Chief Veterinary Adviser. Defra is keeping the risk under review, alongside all other available evidence, throughout the lifetime of this licence. If the national risk level increases, the Secretary of State may modify the General Licence.

Post Implementation Review (PIR)

Why is Defra undertaking a Post Implementation Review (PIR) of the legislation setting out gamebirds licencing requirements?

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (Variation of Schedule 9) (England) (No. 2) Order 2021 contains a review provision which means that the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is required to conduct a review of the effectiveness of the current gamebird regulations which was due to be published by 30th May 2024. However, due to restrictions on departmental business during the pre-election period, publication of PIRs will happen after the election.