

Our ref: 60305968
24 October 2023

Mr Carroll
???

Account reference: request-1037531-434e6671@whatdotheyknow.com

Freedom of Information Act 2000

Dear Mr Carroll

We can confirm that the information requested is held by Birmingham City Council and we have detailed below the information that is being released to you.

Request

"I am writing to make an open government request for all the information to which I am entitled under the freedom of information act and the environmental information regulations.

Could you please confirm the species and numbers of birds forwarded for post mortem from Brookvale Park Birmingham , West Midlands- approximate nat grid reference SP091911 and supply me with the preliminary, supplementary and final reports concerning recent bird deaths from the APHA- ie all those from May 2023.

We have retrieved several birds from this site in the last three months, and allegedly Birmingham City Council forwarded some of them to the APHA for investigation.

Most were found to be riddled with maggots, the site having fluctuating water levels, and tree debris littering the lake. Previous confirmed botulism episodes at this lake and clinical observations of birds support the likely cause of botulism again- fuelled by the continued conditions at this site.

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It is noted that no birds in the BCC area appear to have tested positive for avian flu according to the APHA publication list, up to week 40 (2nd-8th October 2023).

It is noted that none appear to have tested positive for avian flu according to the APHA publication list, with only one bird, a peregrine falcon in week 4 coming from Birmingham.

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/652543deaea2d0000d219ad6/ai-findings-2023-wk40.csv/preview>

Can you CONFIRM therefore that these birds at Brookvale park died from avian botulism, and was this a "presumptive diagnosis" without carrying out a test for this summer related illness?

I believe these may have been submitted to the Shrewsbury laboratory since May. Any names appearing on the reports of officers may be redacted if you wish, but not the cause of death, as there is a strong public interest to establish the real cause of death of these birds, rather than false information and narratives about "avian flu", which clearly these birds DID NOT have. The public should not be misled".

Response

"Could you please confirm the species and numbers of birds forwarded for post mortem from Brookvale Park Birmingham, West Midlands- approximate nat grid reference SP091911 and supply me with the preliminary, supplementary and final reports concerning recent bird deaths from the APHA- i.e. all those from May 2023."

None of the birds recovered from Brookvale Park were fit for post-mortem (birds have to be fresh collected/free from putrefaction).

"We have retrieved several birds from this site in the last three months, and allegedly Birmingham City Council forwarded some of them to the APHA for investigation."

The bird carcasses that were deposited into the front garden of a Council Tenant were not fit for testing as they were in an advanced state of

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putrefaction/liquefaction. As stated for tests to be carried out birds have to be fresh collected/free from putrefaction.

“Most were found to be riddled with maggots, the site having fluctuating water levels, and tree debris littering the lake. Previous confirmed botulism episodes at this lake and clinical observations of birds support the likely cause of botulism again- fuelled by the continued conditions at this site.

It is noted that no birds in the BCC area appear to have tested positive for avian flu according to the APHA publication list, up to week 40 (2nd-8th October 2023).”

This is not true. A Peregrine Falcon tested positive for Avian Influenza in week four of 2023 as stated below.

“It is noted that none appear to have tested positive for avian flu according to the APHA publication list , with only one bird, a peregrine falcon in week 4 coming from Birmingham.

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/652543deaea2d0000d219ad6/ai-findings-2023-wk40.csv/preview>”

Birds were submitted for testing from Witton Lakes Grid Ref SP 088 923, 1 Swan (Cygnet) 1 Coot, 1 Tufted Duck and 4 Mallard Ducks from Witton Lakes were collected and frozen for submission to APHA along with an adult male Swan from Norman Chamberlain Pool, Grid Ref SP 156 883, APHA references WSF-A9E6_FHH3-2EC4/WSF-X4K3-PYDJ-RE84. After 4 days APHA had not arranged collection, advice received from the APHA/Defra call handlers on the week commencing 10 July 2023 that as Avian Influenza had been previously recorded in the locality that any bird deaths that did not have other obvious reasons (for example, dog attack) should be treated as Avian Influenza. Avian Influenza has been previously recorded at Brookvale Park/Witton Lakes in 2022.

“Can you CONFIRM therefore that these birds at Brookvale park died from avian botulism, and was this a "presumptive diagnosis" without carrying out a test for this summer related illness?”

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Please read previous answer, in addition a Cygnet at Witton Lakes less than 0.9km away from Brookvale Park was euthanised by the RSPCA within this time frame displaying symptoms of Avian Influenza.

“I believe these may have been submitted to the Shrewsbury laboratory since May. Any names appearing on the reports of officers may be redacted if you wish, but not the cause of death, as there is a strong public interest to establish the real cause of death of these birds, rather than false information and narratives about "avian flu" ,which clearly these birds DID NOT have. The public should not be misled'.”

As Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza HPAI (H5N1) is a risk to human health this dictates our response.

Please quote the reference number 60305968 in any future communications.

If you are dissatisfied with our response to your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review. Internal review requests should be submitted within 40 working days from the date this authority issued its initial response. Please outline which part of the response you are not happy with setting out your reasons. This request should be addressed to:

Corporate Information Governance Team
PO Box 16366
Birmingham
B2 2YY
Email: infogovernance@birmingham.gov.uk

If you are still dissatisfied with the Council’s response after the internal review you have a right of appeal to the Information Commissioner at:

The Information Commissioner's Office

Website: www.ico.org.uk

We will now close your request as of this date.

Yours sincerely

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