Preliminary Outbreak Assessment

Outbreaks of H5N8 Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in poultry in Germany and Italy

23rd December 2014

Ref: VITT/1200 H5N8 HPAI in Italy & Germany

Disease Report

Italy has reported for the first time an outbreak of H5N8 highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in the province of Rovigo, Veneto, following reports of increased mortality. The affected premises is a turkey fattener farm of ~32,000 birds, which forms part of a large enterprise with holdings in several Italian regions. Disease control measures set out in Directive 2005/94/EC have been implemented, including the establishment of 3km protection and 10 km surveillance zones, in addition to culling, and cleansing and disinfection (OIE, 2014a).

Germany has reported two further outbreaks of H5N8 HPAI, since the initial one in November in Mecklenurg Vorpommern. The first on the 16th December in the district of Cloppenburg in Lower Saxony in a poultry holding consisting of ~18,000 birds (turkey fatteners) following clinical signs (increased mortality) reported. The second was in an indoor duck fattening unit of ~10,000 birds in Elmsland region, Lower Saxony. Disease control measures set out in Directive 2005/94/EC have been implemented. Culling on the infected premises has bee completed, and movement controls and tracings have been implemented (OIE, 2014b).

In addition, Germany has also reported another wild bird testing positive for H5N8 HPAI, this time, a mallard (Anas platyrhynchos) in Sachsen Anhalt.

Sequence analyses for the viruses are anticipated with interest, to determine the relationships to those from outbreaks in Netherlands, Germany and the UK as well as further afield in Canada, USA, Japan, Republic of Korea and China, potentially providing insights into origins.
Situation Assessment

H5N8 HPAI has now been reported in four European Union Member States including the UK, and comprehensive updates were presented on the situation in Germany, the UK and the Netherlands at the meeting of the EU Plant Animal, Food and Feed Committee (PAFF) held on 5th December (see http://ec.europa.eu/food/committees/regulatory/scfcah/animal_health/presentations_en.htm#03022009. At that time, one outbreak in Germany was reported in fattening turkeys in the Mecklenburg-Vorpommern region, plus a positive surveillance sample from a shot wild duck approximately 100km from the IP. Netherlands reported 5 outbreaks amongst breeding and laying poultry, in addition to positive faecal samples from wild birds. Ongoing epidemiological investigations into the source of the EU poultry outbreaks have failed to reveal any poultry sector source to date for the majority of cases.

Since January 2014, H5N8 HPAI has caused outbreaks in the Republic of Korea, Japan and China. More recently, the USA has reported a case in two wild birds: a captive Gyrfalcon which had been fed on hunted wild waterfowl. There have been no reports of human cases of H5N8 HPAI. According to the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA, 2014), the entry of H5N8 HPAI into Europe, and its subsequent spread within Europe are separate events, with possibly two different transmission vectors. As there are no known direct bird migration routes from Asia to Western Europe, long distance transmission could have resulted from crossover between birds congregating in North Eurasian breeding sites. The opinion of EFSA on the epidemiology of the spread of H5N8 HPAI within Europe is that transmission has occurred via fomites or indirectly via contact with humans or livestock or animal-derived products. EFSA recommendations include assessment and improvement of biosecurity procedures in high risk areas, focussing on segregation between poultry and wild birds and specifically to reduce indirect fomite transmission risk in particular including the use of cleansing and disinfection. For wild birds, enhancement of active and passive surveillance of wild birds in the high risk areas to facilitate targeted measures to mitigate risk of spread.

According to TRACES, the EU Trade notification system, there have been no recent consignments of poultry (live birds, day old chicks or hatching eggs) to the UK from the affected regions in Italy or Germany.

Conclusion

The continuing outbreaks of H5N8 HPAI occurring across the EU, their geospatial characteristics and timelines make it likely the source of infection is through indirect contact with infected wild birds. This means the likelihood of the UK having another outbreak is increased for the upcoming period. There is no significant increase in risk as a result of the infection on the premises in Italy and Germany as there has been no trade
recently, but vigilance for our poultry keepers and any attending veterinarians should continue to be enhanced.

We will continue to report on the situation. We would like to remind all poultry keepers to maintain high standards of biosecurity and report any suspect clinical signs promptly. For reports of wild birds (any number of swans, ducks and geese or >5 other birds) found dead by the public, please notify the Defra helpline on 03459 33 55 77 and see the Gov.uk website for more information: https://www.gov.uk/avian-influenza-bird-flu

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References


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