

Preliminary Outbreak Assessment

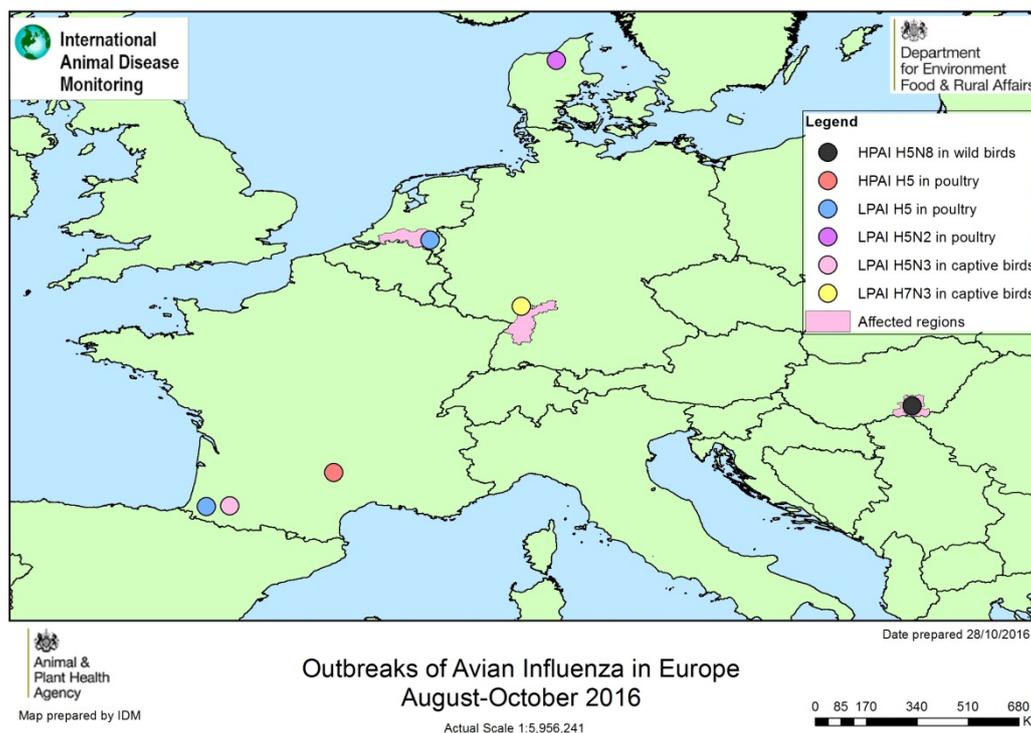
Avian Influenza (H5 and H7 strains) in Europe

31 October 2016

Ref: VITT/1200 Avian Influenza in Europe

Disease Report

The Hungarian authorities have confirmed HPAI H5N8 in a (wild) Mute Swan by a lake in Csongrad region, a well-known rest place for migratory birds at this time of year (European Commission, 2016). This is the first report of HPAI H5N8 this year in the EU and follows the case in wild birds in Central Russia reported in June 2016 (Defra, 2016) after which the FAO warned of the likely further spread and increase in risk to areas with migratory birds in Europe (Empres Watch, 2016). The same subgroup or clade (2.3.4.4) of H5 viruses was also detected in USA (Alaska) in August 2016 in wild mallards (EU Reference Laboratory for Avian Influenza, 2016).



In other unrelated disease reports, the Netherlands has confirmed an outbreak of low pathogenic avian influenza, H5 (N type not determined) in turkeys in Deurne, Limburg (OIE, 2016). The holding contained approximately 12,000 turkeys, 5,000 ducks and 2,000 pheasant; no clinical signs were observed. Disease control measures are in place, and a 1km restriction zone has been established in line with Directive 2005/94/EC. The birds have been depopulated. The four other premises in the 1km zone have been screened. In

an unlinked incident, the German authorities reported an outbreak of LPAI H7N3 in captive birds in Mannheim on 18th October to the European Union Animal Disease Notification System. According to the local German Government website, disease was detected in pheasants and a further 52 birds (ducks, guinea fowl and peacocks) were humanely destroyed to prevent further spread of the virus

(http://www.rnz.de/nachrichten/mannheim_artikel,-Vogelgrippe-im-Mannheimer-Luisenpark-Noch-mehr-Tiere-getoetet- arid,230233.html).

Situation Assessment

The finding in Hungary is significant because the virus was last detected in the EU in early 2015 (including two incidents of wild Mute Swans in Sweden collected in February/March [EU Reference Laboratory for Avian Influenza, 2016]), indicating that it may not have returned with wild birds last winter, with a strong caveat regarding sensitivity of surveillance in wild bird populations. These reports, alongside that from Russia in June, indicate that this particular virus is circulating in wild birds which may transport it over wide distances through the migration routes. This particular subgroup or clade of H5 HPAI virus does not always show high mortality in wild birds and the presence in new regions may be detected first in clinically susceptible poultry species where there has been direct or indirect contact with infected wild birds.

Low pathogenicity viruses of H5 and H7 European strains circulate in wild birds and occasionally cause spill-over into poultry or captive birds in the EU. Early detection and swift control measures are necessary to prevent spread and reduce the likelihood of the viruses mutating in poultry to a highly pathogenic strain. In June there was an outbreak of LPAI H7N9 avian influenza in poultry in Friesland in the northern Netherlands; this was the European strain of virus and not related to the virus circulating in poultry in China and causing human cases.

According to TRACES, the EU Electronic Trade Notification System, there has been no recent trade of live poultry, hatching eggs or day old chicks from the affected regions in the Netherlands, Germany or Hungary to the UK. Meat and table eggs are lower risk commodities and provided they are not diverted from the human food chain do not represent a risk to poultry. The outbreak in Germany is restricted to a zoo and has not been detected in poultry.

Conclusion

We would like to take the opportunity to highlight the “testing for exclusion” regime in GB. Where avian influenza (or Newcastle Disease) is **not** strongly suspected, a poultry keeper and their private veterinarian now have access to a testing service at the National Reference Laboratory, Weybridge. This will help detect a notifiable avian disease at the earliest opportunity for those cases. It is aimed at those cases where clinical signs cannot exclude NAD in a differential diagnosis and yet do not justify a consultation case or official

inquiry. For more information, please see Gibbens *et al.* (2014) and www.defra.gov.uk/ahvla-en/disease-control/nad

At this stage, we consider that as there has been only limited trade with Germany, Hungary or Netherlands in live poultry (including hatching eggs) and not from the affected premises there is a negligible risk of disease introduction into the UK via this route as a result of these specific outbreaks. Surveillance, early detection and swift disease control measures reassure us. Nevertheless there would remain a constant low risk of the introduction of any notifiable avian disease into the UK poultry sector due to the likely circulation in wild birds and contact with domestic flocks. It is still relatively early in the season and the migration season is underway across Northern Europe that will also be influenced by cold weather patterns, so there may be a risk for HPAI H5N8 incursion into poultry as the season continues.

We will continue to report on the situation. We would like to remind all poultry keepers to maintain high standards of biosecurity, remain vigilant and report any suspect clinical signs promptly. Poultry keepers should also remind themselves of the mild clinical signs of LPAI infection and be aware of any changes in egg production, feed and water intake or rise in mortality.

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References

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Animal & Plant Health Agency
Veterinary & Science Policy Advice Team - International Disease Monitoring

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