

Updated Outbreak Assessment number 7

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza H5N8 in the UK and Europe

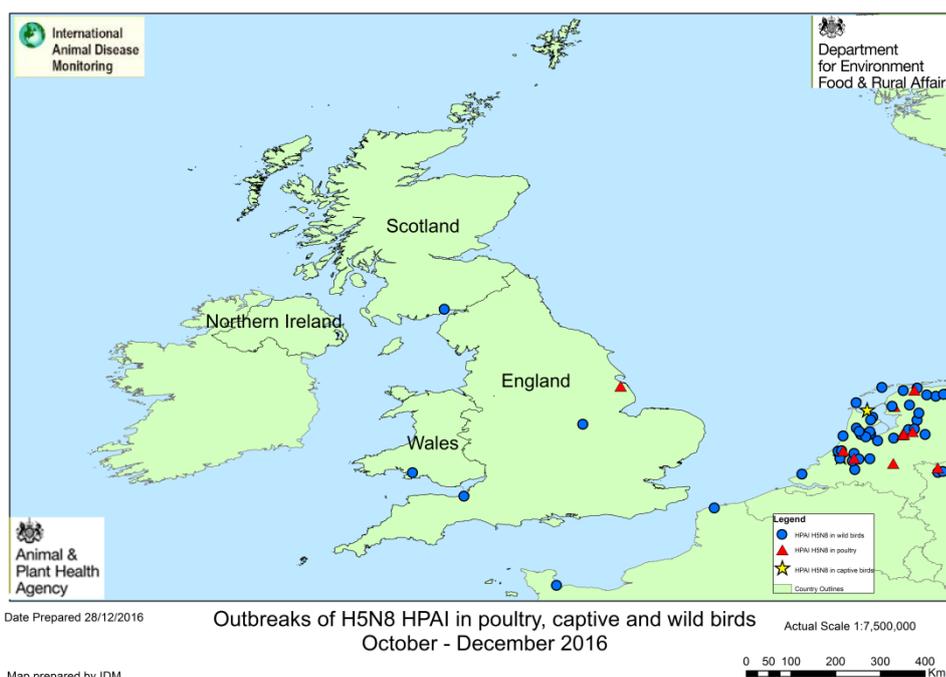
29th December 2016

Ref: VITT/1200 Avian Influenza in UK & Europe

Disease Report

The turkey premises which tested positive for H5N8 HPAI reported in our last update on the 20th December, has been culled and preliminary cleansing and disinfection was completed on the 19th December. Initial visits and testing in the 3km Protection Zone has shown there appears to have been no local spread. Tracings have also been conducted, according to epidemiological principals and again, there is no indication of spread. The PZ will be merged with the 10 km Surveillance Zone on the 9th January unless further disease is confirmed. A GB-wide Prevention Zone remains in place in which poultry keepers are required to keep high level of biosecurity and, where practicable, to house birds and to keep species separate; in addition, the general licence for bird gatherings has been amended, such that gatherings with poultry or captive birds of the anseriforme and galliforme orders are prohibited.

As expected, several findings of wild birds testing positive for the H5N8 HPAI virus have



now been made in England, Scotland and Wales (see map). Specifically, wigeons were found dead during routine surveillance activities at wildfowl assemblage areas in West Wales (Llanelli), Rutland and Somerset, while in Dumfries, again in a national park, a peregrine falcon was found ill and was euthanased.

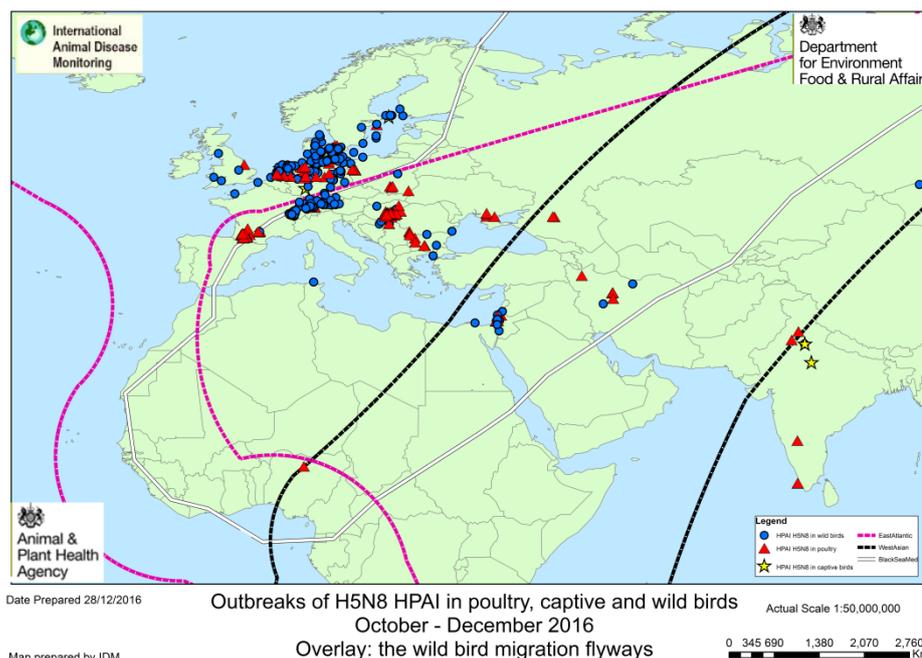
Laboratory tests on all these birds were carried out at the National Reference Laboratory, Weybridge and the results indicated that the virus was very closely related to those found

in the poultry outbreak in Lincoln, other domestic poultry outbreaks and other wild bird cases in Europe this year. No large wild bird die-offs have been reported and given these species of birds are commonly found across Europe and have been testing positive, these findings are of no surprise.

Situation Assessment

Elsewhere, the virus continues to cause outbreaks in Bulgaria, France, Netherlands, Germany, Poland and Hungary.

Further afield, Israel has reported more cases in wild birds while South Korea, Japan and Taiwan have reported outbreaks in poultry. Given the level of geographic spread across Europe, Asia and west Africa, we should expect this virus to remain an issue and pose a continuing risk to our poultry sector for a considerable time.



The risk level for the UK is still **“HIGH”** for an incursion of an infected wild bird, but now that we have wild bird findings, our level of uncertainty has reduced. The risk to poultry on individual premises is still **“LOW TO MEDIUM”** dependent on the level of on-farm biosecurity. The widespread location of the positive wild birds suggests that geographical region may be less important in terms of risk level for poultry premises.

The European Food Safety Authority has produced a scientific opinion on the measures which should be taken around wild bird findings (EFSA, 2017). In the case of the UK, the majority of these measures are already in place, through the Prevention Zone declaratory order and prohibition on gatherings.

As a result of the increase in cases in wild birds in Europe, we ask that the public use the **Defra helpline (Tel: 03459 33 55 77)** to report findings of dead wild birds. In particular, any wild ducks, wild geese, swans, gulls or birds of prey and where more than five birds of any species are found dead in the same location.

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Animal & Plant Health Agency
Veterinary & Science Policy Advice Team - International Disease Monitoring

Further information is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/avian-influenza-bird-flu> including updated biosecurity advice for poultry keepers which they should take note of: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/avian-influenza-bird-flu#prevention-zone>

Conclusion

The findings in wild birds in GB is not surprising given the continued level of reporting in other Member States and therefore the likelihood of circulating virus in wild birds. In cold weather, the virus will remain infectious in certain media, such as water or on some surfaces so attention to contaminated areas and regular disinfection is important. We will continue with the epidemiological investigations on the premises and report any additional findings to the OIE and EU, as appropriate.

We would like to remind all poultry keepers that there are several pathways for the introduction of any notifiable avian disease into a poultry farm: housing alone will not be enough to reduce the risk of some of these pathways. Environmental contamination will remain as a significant hazard, especially if wild waterfowl or gulls have regular access to the site, or contaminate the local area around the houses, so personal biosecurity is key to helping prevent contamination from being brought into a poultry house.

We will continue to report on the situation

Authors

International Disease Monitoring team

References

For all disease outbreaks, more information is available on the OIE website at http://www.oie.int/wahis_2/public/wahid.php/Diseaseinformation/WI

EFSA (2017) Urgent request on avian influenza. EFSA Journal 15(1): 4687.

See also:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/avian-influenza-bird-flu#bird-fairs-markets-shows-and-other-gatherings> ;

<http://gov.wales/topics/environmentcountryside/ahw/poultry/bird-gatherings-advice/?lang=en> ;

<http://gov.scot/avianinfluenza>

For up-to-date information on the situation in the EU, also see the Commission website at https://ec.europa.eu/food/animals/animal-diseases/control-measures/avian-influenza_en

See our interactive map at <https://iadm.carto.com/me>

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