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

Updated Outbreak Assessment number 8

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza H5N8 in the UK and Europe

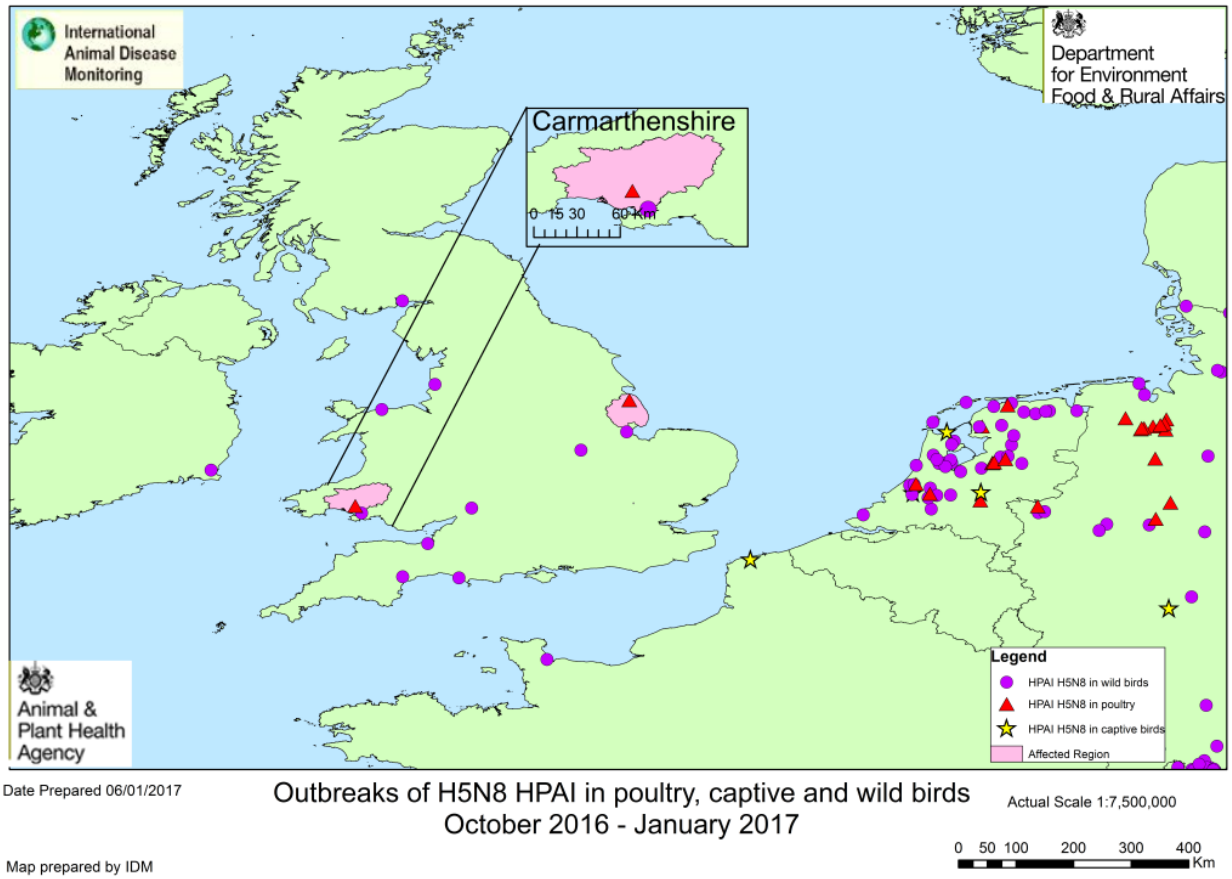
6 January 2017 Ref: VITT/1200 Avian Influenza in UK & Europe

Disease report

The visits and tracings around the IP in East Lindsey, Lincolnshire are almost complete and no further outbreaks have been detected. Secondary C&D is underway. The restriction zones will be merged after midnight on the 9th January.

In West Wales, a small backyard flock, which had not been housed and where chickens were mixing freely with Muscovy ducks, has tested positive for H5N8 HPAI, on a holding just 18km from the wild bird finding in Llanelli, Carmarthenshire. The chickens were showing clinical signs and all the birds were depopulated; primary cleansing and disinfection was completed and is effective as of 14:00 on the 5th January.

The report will be made to the OIE as a follow-up report, once the system is available again. This is not considered a new incident, as the presence of infected wild birds in GB means new sporadic incursions are expected, but the epidemiological investigations conclude there are no links between this and the case in East Lindsey.

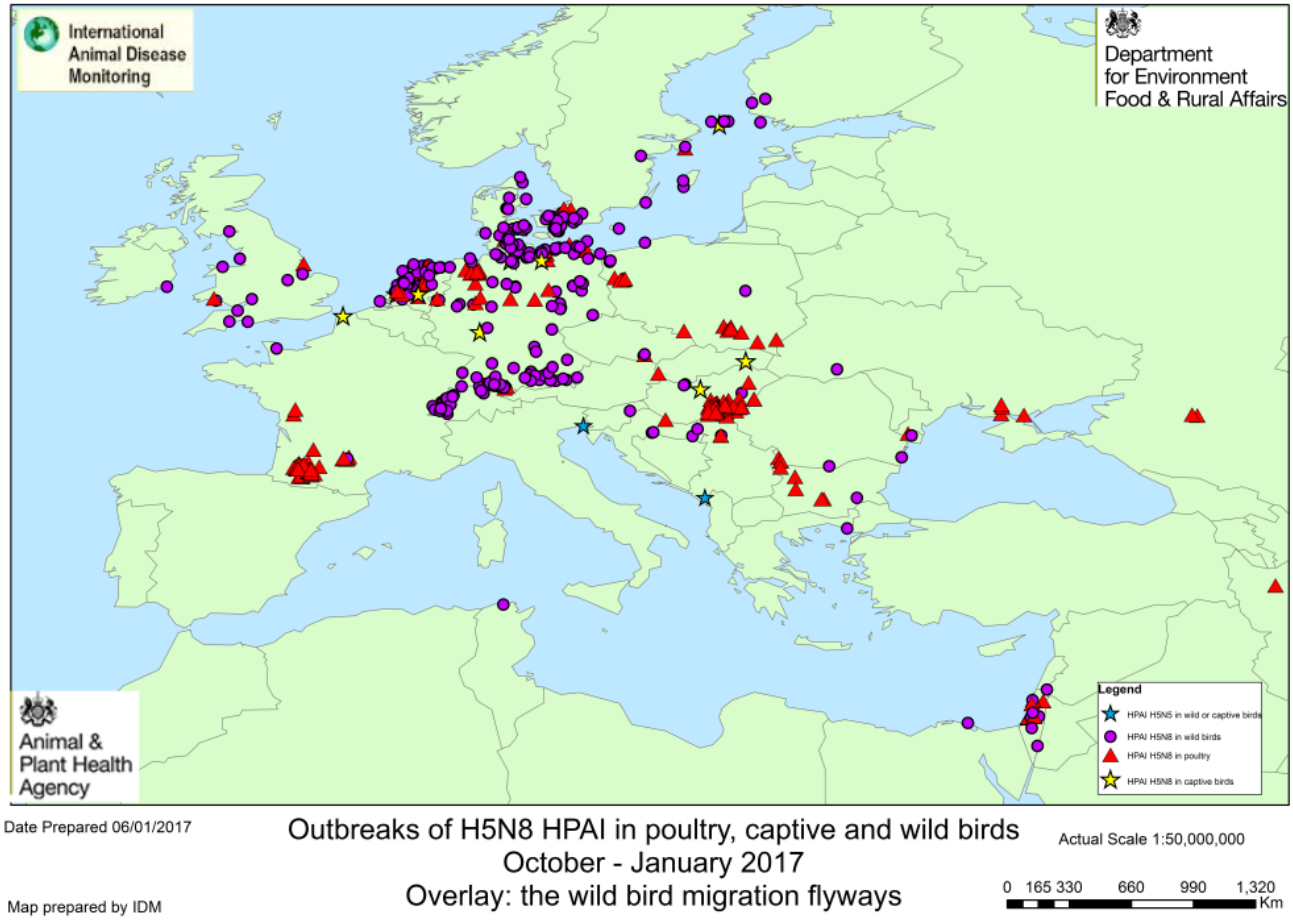


A GB-wide Prevention Zone remains in place until the end of February 28th, at which time it will be reviewed and the effectiveness of the measures compared to the risk level will be considered. Within the Prevention Zone poultry keepers (including those of small or backyard, non-commercial flocks and captive birds) are required to keep a high level of biosecurity, to keep species separate, feed under a roof with commercial feed, provide clean drinking water and where practicable, to house birds; 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, more findings of wild birds testing positive for the H5N8 HPAI virus have been made. In England, mute swans in Dorset (at a swannery), a wigeon, a greylag goose, a white fronted goose and a Canada goose in Gloucestershire, wigeons in Leicestershire and Lincolnshire, pochards, a mallard, a cormorant and a black headed gull in Merseyside and a teal in Conwy, North Wales (see map). Laboratory tests on all these birds were carried out at the National and EU/OIE/FAO Reference Laboratory, Weybridge and the results indicated that the virus was very closely related to those found in the poultry outbreaks in Lincolnshire and West Wales, in other domestic poultry outbreaks in the EU and other wild bird cases 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. From now on, all wild bird positives will be published on a weekly basis on the APHA website at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/avian-influenza-in-wild-birds-winter-2016-to-2017. Only exceptional reports in new regions or unusual wild bird findings (ie a change to

the disease epidemiology) will be officially reported on an ad hoc basis. The OIE and EU annual and six monthly reports will be updated accordingly.

Situation assessment



Elsewhere, the virus continues to cause outbreaks and new countries reporting disease include Ireland (a single wild wigeon only), Slovakia and Czech Republic. Wild bird findings and outbreaks continue to be reported in Croatia, France, Germany, Poland and Sweden. We should expect this virus to remain an issue and pose a continuing risk to our poultry sector for a considerable time. In addition, Italy, Netherlands and Montenegro have all reported H5N5 HPAI, which is a new strain to be reported in Europe and the significance of which is yet to be elucidated. It is likely to be a result of intensified surveillance for H5N8 HPAI, but the origin of this virus and the involvement of wild birds are not yet understood.

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 and the geographic area where we expect more findings in wild birds, is wider. 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 positive 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 positive findings 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.

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 ;
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

This publication is available at https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/animal-diseases-international-monitoring

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