Disease report

Since our last report on 22 January 2020, Germany has reported an outbreak of H5N8 HPAI in a backyard poultry holding in Baden-Württemberg in the south west of the country. Poland and Slovakia have also reported further H5N8 HPAI outbreaks. Measures in accordance with Council Directive 2005/94/EC have been implemented, including culling of the poultry at all affected premises, followed by disposal of the carcasses. There have been no further cases in wild birds reported.

Highly pathogenic avian influenza in Poultry and Wild birds Europe December 2019 - February 2020 Overlay: migratory bird flyways
Situation assessment

Germany confirmed its first outbreak in domestic poultry on 10 February, in a smallholding with laying hens (49), ducks (6) and geese (2). Other non-poultry species were also kept at the premises (9 canaries and 3 pheasants). The source of infection has not yet been confirmed. There have been no further cases of H5N8 HPAI in wild birds since a Greater white-fronted goose (*Anser albifrons*) was reported on 19 January in the north eastern region of Spree-Neisse, close to the Polish border.

In a risk assessment produced by the Friedrich Loeffler Institute (FLI, 2020), the risk level in Germany has been raised to medium. They also report that 704 wild birds (mostly swans, ducks and Geese) have been tested since 1/12/2019 and all were negative, except the one white fronted goose in January (FLI, February 2020).

Poland has reported seven further outbreaks of H5N8 HPAI in poultry since our last report on 22 January, bringing the total number of outbreaks to 21. Four of these outbreaks have been in commercial holdings affecting turkeys: on 23 January H5N8 HPAI was confirmed in a large commercial premises affecting approximately 37,000 birds in the Szamotulski area. On 24 January H5N8 HPAI was confirmed in a commercial premises in Ilawski (roughly 23,000 birds). Followed by outbreaks on 29 January (approx. 36,000 birds, in Wolsztynski, west Poland) and 7 February (just under 4,000 birds, in Ostrodzki, north Poland).

Three outbreaks were reported in backyard flocks, with two in Ostrowski (affecting 161 and 165 birds) as well as 63 hens in Raciborski (south west Poland, close to the Czech border). The disease now has a large geographic range across Poland and compliance to high biosecurity standards will be imperative in reducing further disease spread. Control measures have been implemented. There have been no further reports of HPAI in wild birds in Poland after the Northern Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*) reported on 06 January in the PZ in the east.

Slovakia has reported one further outbreak of H5N8 HPAI in a poultry small-holding (type unreported) on 27 January involving 10 birds, in the north of the country. This brings the total number of outbreaks in poultry to three since the first report on 9 January. There has also been an outbreak in captive birds in a zoo in Trencín with mortality observed in multiple species: Wood Duck (1), Silver Teal (3), Eurasian Spoonbill (4) and Berniers Teal (1).

Czech Republic, Hungary Romania and Ukraine have reported no new outbreaks since our last report.

According to data available on TRACES, GB has not imported any live birds or eggs from any of the other areas surrounding these outbreaks in the weeks prior to and after the detection of disease.
Conclusion

The OIE/FAO international reference laboratory/UK national laboratory at Weybridge has the necessary ongoing diagnostic capability for these strains of virus, whether low or high pathogenicity AI and continually monitors changes in the virus.

Though the virus has now been confirmed in western Europe, this represents a single small-holding, with limited trade impact, and does not yet confirm the involvement of wild birds in this area. Given these data, and the recent findings in domestic poultry in Eastern Europe, the limited findings in wild birds across Europe, and the possibility of migration to the UK if the weather were to become cold in Eastern Europe, currently the risk of HPAI in wild birds in the UK is LOW (i.e. no change at present) but we are monitoring this very closely.

The risk for poultry in the UK remains low for introduction of infection onto individual premises, but will depend on levels of biosecurity which we recommend should be increased. We are keeping this under review.

The numbers of wild waterfowl in the UK will generally have peaked by January, with most migratory birds already present at their wintering sites in the UK. Adverse weather may result in further influxes from the continent. Indeed, the bird migration flyways indicated on the map above relate more to spring and autumn passage and may not be particularly relevant at this time of the year. Compared with previous years, the relative lack of cases along the Baltic coast is also in contrast to previous large epidemics with H5 HPAI. The source of infection is yet to be confirmed and does not necessary implicate the involvement of wild birds. However, it cannot be concluded at this stage that outbreaks in poultry will not spread west in the next few weeks. The risk of introduction to UK poultry depends upon the level of biosecurity implemented on farm to prevent the direct or indirect contact with wild birds. It should be noted that the virus could potentially survive on pasture in wild bird faeces for several weeks at current ambient temperatures emphasising importance of these measures.

Outbreaks of HPAI in domestic poultry are increasing and spreading across Eastern Europe, with incursion in to western Europe now observed, albeit in a single small holding in Germany. Due to the lower numbers of H5 HPAI outbreaks observed in 2018/19 (especially lower incidence in wild birds associated with mortality) compared to previous years, there may now be more limited immunity in the naive wild bird population to H5 viruses, with a large susceptible population of avian hosts in the form of juvenile birds which migrated to the UK in autumn 2019.

We recommend that all poultry keepers stay vigilant and make themselves aware of the latest information on www.gov.uk, particularly about recommendations for biosecurity and how to register their flocks.
We will continue to report on any updates to the situation in Europe and, in particular, any changes in disease distribution or wild bird movements which may increase the risk to the UK.


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References
All outbreaks and cases were taken from the Animal Disease Notification System (ADNS)


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