Updated Situation Assessment #13

Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in Europe

24 March 2020 Ref: VITT/1200 HPAI in Europe

Disease report

Since our last report on 16 March 2020 [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/858047/hpai-europe-update8-jan2020.pdf], in Germany, another wild bird (a common buzzard) was reported to have tested positive for H5N8 in the Leipzig region; and an outbreak was reported on a large turkey farm, near the Dutch border.

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

**Germany** reported an outbreak of HPAI H5N8 in breeding turkeys on 21 March; in the Aurich region, in the north-west of the country, close to border with the Netherlands. The affected premises is a large turkey breeder farm with 10,579 birds. Of these, 130 were reported to have died from disease, and the remaining birds were culled. Following an outbreak in a backyard poultry holding on 12 March in Leipzig (see previous outbreak assessment), a wild bird case, in a common buzzard (*Buteo buteo*), was reported in the same area (see map) on 21 March.

**Bulgaria, Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakıa and Ukraine** have reported no new outbreaks since our last update on 16 March.

According to data available on TRACES\(^1\), GB has not imported any live birds or eggs from any of the areas surrounding the new German outbreak in the Aurich region, 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.

Although an outbreak of HPAI H5N8 has occurred in poultry in north-western Germany near to the eastern border of the Netherlands, there are no more reports of cases in wild birds near to the UK. The H5N8-positive common buzzard was located in eastern Germany where H5N8 has recently been reported in poultry. The detection of HPAI in poultry in Germany, particularly along the north-coast so near to the Netherlands, would be of great concern to the UK were it to occur in the autumn months, when wildfowl are migrating westwards to the UK. However at this time of year in late March, with the start of the migration of wild ducks, geese and swans away from their wintering sites in the UK to their breeding grounds in northern Europe/Russia, the risk of HPAI incursion in wild birds in the UK should be decreasing and is therefore still considered to be **LOW** (i.e. no change at present). We are monitoring this very closely.

The overall risk for poultry in the UK remains low, but the risk of introduction to individual premises depends upon the level of biosecurity implemented on farm to prevent 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 ambient temperatures in late March, emphasising the importance of these measures. We recommend biosecurity measures should be maintained. We are keeping this under review.

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\(^1\) Trade Control and Expert System
Immunity of UK wild birds to H5 HPAI may be low at present. 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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