Updated Situation Assessment #15

Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in Europe

21 April 2020

Disease report

Since our last report on 03 April 2020, Hungary has reported 119 new outbreaks of HPAI H5N8. All continue to be on commercial poultry premises. There have been no other new reports elsewhere in Europe.

Situation assessment

Since 03 April, Hungary has reported 119 outbreaks in commercial poultry. These have been reported to ADNS as secondary outbreaks, and linked to two primary outbreaks. Both primary outbreaks have been previously reported. The two secondary outbreaks...
clusters are in the south of the country, in the neighbouring counties of Bács-Kiskun and of Csongrád. This area has a high density of commercial poultry (reportedly, ducks and geese) (Cauchard et al, 2020). In the county of Bács-Kiskun, 109 secondary outbreaks have been reported. The primary outbreak for this cluster was confirmed on 25 March on a holding with 15,545 ducks. To date, there has been no official update as to species for these secondary outbreaks. The other outbreak cluster is in the neighbouring county of Csongrád, with reports of 10 secondary outbreaks. The primary outbreak for this cluster was confirmed on 31 March, also on a holding with a significant number of ducks (141,562). As with the cluster in Bács-Kiskun county, reports for those in Csongrád county have yet to be updated for species. (Reports to the OIE for these outbreaks have listed their species as “birds”.) In all the farms, measures for control and eradication have been prompt. Movement restrictions continue, with surveillance measures established in accordance with Council Directive 2005/94/EC and Hungarian legislation. No cases in wild birds have been reported to date. Disease appears to be widespread in commercial premises in this area, with surveillance activities identifying new outbreaks. It is assumed that these outbreaks in southern Hungary represent the most southern extension of the ongoing H5N8 outbreak in northern-central Europe, the progenitor of which is related to the African strain of H5N8, and are not the same HPAIV H5N8 strain that has been circulating in Bulgaria since 2018.

**Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Germany, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine** have reported no new outbreaks since our last update on 03 April. Outbreaks in both Poland (one) and Bulgaria (two) have been reported to the OIE during April, however, their locations and stock numbers indicate these to have been outbreaks previously reported to ADNS and therefore discussed in our last report.

According to data available on TRACES¹, GB has not imported any live birds or eggs from any of the areas surrounding these outbreaks in the weeks prior to and after 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.

An outbreak of HPAI H5N8 was reported in poultry in north-western Germany near to the eastern border of the Netherlands in March. Since then, there have been no new reports of outbreaks in poultry or cases in wild birds nearer to the UK. As described in our last report, the detection of HPAI in poultry along the north-coast of Germany, so near to the Netherlands, would be of great concern to the UK were it to occur in the autumn months

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¹ Trade Control and Expert System
when wildfowl are migrating westwards to the UK. However, at this time of year, the migration of wild ducks, geese and swans away from their wintering sites in the UK to their breeding grounds in northern Europe/Russia will be commencing. Therefore, the risk of HPAI incursion in wild birds in the UK should be decreasing and is still considered to be LOW (i.e. no change at present). Further, the geospatial mapping of the wild bird cases is in direct contrast to previous years where greater infection presence correlated with more poultry incursions in the Baltic/north European region. We are monitoring this very closely.

The overall risk of infection of 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 at this time of year, emphasising the importance of these measures. We recommend biosecurity measures should be maintained. We are keeping this under review.

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.


Authors

Anthony Pacey
Dr Francesca Gauntlett
Charlotte Coxon
Daniel Jeronimo

References

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

Details of outbreaks were also taken from OIE.