Updated Situation Assessment #17

Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in Europe

09 June 2020

Ref: VITT/1200 HPAI in Europe

Disease report

Since our last report on 07 May 2020, Bulgaria has reported a new outbreak of HPAI H5N8 in a large commercial poultry premises. Hungary has reported fourteen new outbreaks of HPAI H5N8; all continue to be in commercial poultry premises. There have been no other new reports elsewhere in Europe.

Situation assessment

Bulgaria reported a new outbreak of HPAI H5 on 05 June, the first in nearly 3 months, in a laying hen flock in Asenovgrad, Plovdiv. There were reportedly 78,943 birds at the
premises, of which 110 were clinically affected and died. The remaining birds were culled and disease control measures; including movement restrictions, a 3km protection zone and a 10km monitoring zone, are in place. A ban on markets, fairs and exhibitions of birds has also been implemented (SofiaGlobe, 2020). The subtype has not yet been confirmed, but is likely to be either H5N8 or H5N2, as both subtypes are known to be circulating in Bulgaria. The H5N8 viruses identified from outbreaks in Bulgaria so far in 2020, have the same genetic composition a the H5N8 circulating in the country in 2018/19, while the H5N2 is a reassortant strain, with the HA and M genes related to the Bulgarian H5N8 viruses, and the other genes correlated with LPAI viruses collected in Eurasia from domestic and wild birds. The first outbreak in Bulgaria this year, on 17 February in ducks, was a co-infection with both subtypes. However, for all outbreaks in Bulgaria since, H5N2 viruses were all confirmed in laying hen farms and all H5N8 viruses were confirmed in duck farms (EURL, 2020).

**Hungary** has reported fourteen further outbreaks since our last update. Eleven of these are related to the ongoing outbreak at Bács-Kiskun, which was first confirmed on 25 March, representing a jump to southern Hungary. There has now been a total of 235 secondary outbreaks within this cluster. Two of the newly reported outbreaks are related to the most recent cluster, confirmed in early May, in Békés County. Though not as large as the cluster in Bács-Kiskun, some of these outbreaks are notably close to the border with Romania. There was one new outbreak linked to the cluster in Csongrád County, which borders Romania and Serbia to the south; this cluster now includes a total of 25 secondary outbreaks.

Of the premises involved in the primary outbreaks in Békés, one housed geese, and the other two were turkey farms. The primary outbreaks in Bács-Kiskun and Csongrád housed a significant number of ducks, but there remains no official update of the species for these secondary outbreaks, and numbers of birds on farms for these secondary outbreaks vary from a few hundred to 160,000. In all the farms, measures for control and eradication have been undertaken. Movement restrictions continue, with surveillance measures established in accordance with Council Directive 2005/94/EC and Hungarian legislation.

HPAI H5N8 appears to be widespread in commercial premises in southern Hungary, with surveillance activities regularly identifying new outbreaks. It is assumed that these outbreaks represent the most southern extension of the H5N8 outbreak in northern-central Europe, which started in Poland in late December, the progenitor of which was related to the African strain of H5N8. This strain is distinct from the HPAIV H5N8 strain that has been circulating in Bulgaria since 2018.

There have been no reported cases in wild birds in Bulgaria or Hungary to date, and none in Europe since the end of March.

**Czech Republic, Germany, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine** have reported no new outbreaks since our last update on 07 May.
According to data available on TRACES\textsuperscript{1}, GB has not imported any live birds from any of the areas surrounding these outbreaks in the weeks prior to and after detection of disease. Seven imports of eggs intended for scientific research were imported to the UK from Hungary in May.

**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.

The closest outbreak of HPAI H5N8 to the UK was that 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 and no migratory waterbirds will be coming in large numbers to the UK from the east at this time of year. Therefore, the risk of HPAI incursion in wild birds into the UK is still considered to be **LOW** (i.e. no change at present). 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. We recommend biosecurity measures should be maintained.

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**

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\textsuperscript{1} Trade Control and Expert System
References

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

Details of outbreaks were also taken from OIE.
OIE (2020)
https://www.oie.int/wahis_2/public/wahid.php/Diseaseinformation/WI

Sofia Globe (2020)
https://sofiaglobe.com/2020/06/06/bulgaria-reports-bird-flu-outbreak-ninth-since-2020-began/

EU Reference Laboratory (2020)