

Updated Outbreak Assessment #41

Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in the UK and Europe

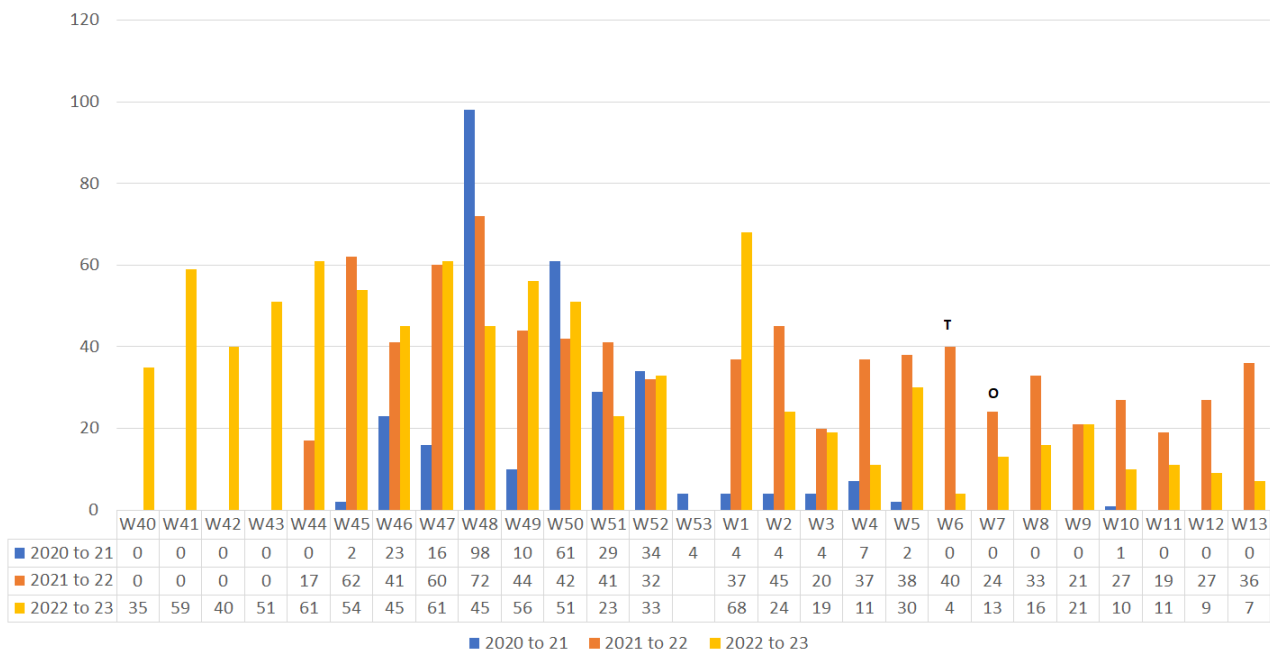
29 March 2023

Disease report

This report is a high-level overview of HPAI in wild birds and poultry in Great Britain since our last outbreak assessment, on 15 March 2023. The primary purpose of this report is to communicate that the risk to poultry in Great Britain with suboptimal biosecurity has been reduced from **high (with low uncertainty) to medium (with high uncertainty)**. This takes into account the reduction in wild bird risk from **very high to high** on 15 March 2023 and is supported by the absence of poultry hobby flock outbreaks in Great Britain since 23 February 2023. The reduction in wild bird risk on 15 March has been further supported by the continued downward trend of reported wild bird HPAI H5 positive cases, with numbers of cases 9 times lower than the peak in Winter 2022 (Figure 1).

There have been no HPAI Infected Premises (IPs) since 9 March 2023. The risk to poultry with stringent biosecurity is maintained at **low (with high uncertainty)**. The number of wild bird positive cases is presented in Figure 1 up to week 12 (full weeks' worth of data).

Figure 1. Wild bird HPAI H5 positive cases^a per week across Great Britain in each season from week 40 (approximately the start of October) to week 13 (late March). Letters denote change in carcass collection threshold for geese and swans from 5 to 3 (T) in England and from 3 to 1 (O) across Great Britain.



^aNote that the wild bird sampling strategy may vary between, and within, seasons. Between weeks 40 and 48, the threshold for collection of wild birds was 3 in 2020 and 2022, and 1 in 2021.

Description of Figure 1. Over the last 4 weeks, the number of wild birds detected with HPAI H5 in Great Britain was 21, 10, 11 and 9 respectively with 7 reported in the first half of week 13 (correct at time of writing). Overall, the number of detections in wild birds has shown a decreasing trend since the peak of 68 detections in week 1 of 2023.

While the number of wild bird positives reported weekly across Great Britain increased gradually between weeks 6 and 9 of 2023 (Figure 1), this is likely an observed effect of the carcass collection threshold change from 5 geese and swans to 3, then to 1 in England (threshold is now also 1 in Scotland and Wales). The number of wild bird detections observed in weeks 10 and 11 has dropped sharply. For further details, please see the report (updated weekly) on findings of [HPAI in wild birds](#) in Great Britain and [Northern Ireland](#).

We are continuing to closely monitor the situation and review the risk.

It is particularly important that stringent adherence to good biosecurity practices is still maintained, particularly with the onset of cold and wet weather.

Strict attention should be made to ensure compliance with reviewed contingency plans, with regular maintenance checks and repairs being carried out promptly not only on

buildings, but to fencing and boundaries of outdoor areas where permitted under housing orders, such as fully netted enclosures and runs in England and Wales and fenced enclosures and ranges in Scotland where there is currently an AIPZ but no housing order in place, to minimise contact with wild birds.

Reinforcement of good biosecurity awareness behaviours and practices should be a constant reminder to all personnel working with birds, any lapse of these measures could still easily result in disease being introduced to poultry and captive birds. This could be via direct contact with wild birds (getting in to housing or on the range in Scotland) or indirect contact, such as contact with contaminated feed, water, bedding, equipment, vermin or clothing including footwear of people in contact with infected birds or contaminated environment including flood water. Special consideration should be made when bringing in equipment and materials, especially bedding and outer packages which may have become contaminated following environmental exposure whilst stored outside.

If you keep poultry (including game birds or as pets), you should follow our [biosecurity best practice advice](#) on GOV.UK.

Remain vigilant for any signs of disease in your flock and report any suspicious clinical signs of avian influenza to the Animal and Plant Health Agency. Contact

- 03000 200 301 in England
- 0300 303 8268 in Wales
- your [local field services office in Scotland](#)

Further guidance about Avian Influenza including updated biosecurity advice for poultry keepers in

- [England is available on GOV.UK](#)
- Wales is available on the [Welsh Government's website](#)
- Scotland is available on the [Scottish Government's website](#)
- North Ireland is available on [DAERA's website](#)

The WOA, FAO International Reference Laboratory and the UK National Reference Laboratory at Weybridge has the necessary diagnostic capability for strains of avian influenza virus, whether of low or high pathogenicity, and continually monitors changes in the virus on a wide scale whilst utilising global networks to gain early insights to epidemiological trends and potential emergence of new genotypes which might change the risk profile.

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.

In England, Scotland and Wales, any findings of the following dead wild birds found at the same location at the same time should be [reported online](#)

- 1 or more dead birds of prey (such as an owl, hawk or buzzard), gull, swan, goose or duck in the same place
- 5 or more dead wild birds of any species in the same place

If you want to submit a report without providing contact details, phone Defra on 03459 33 55 77.

It is advisable that you do not touch these birds.

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