

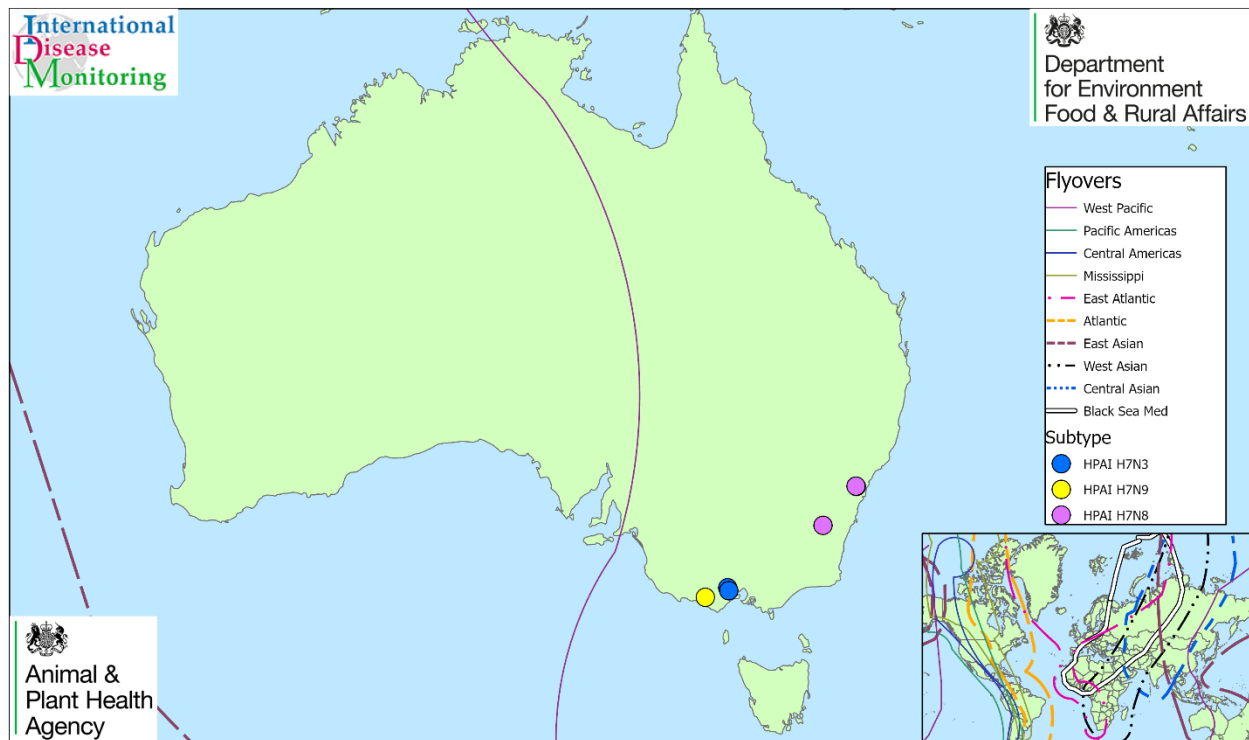
Updated Outbreak Assessment

Highly pathogenic avian influenza (H7N3, H7N9 and now H7N8) in poultry in Australia

30 June 2024

Disease report

In our previous [outbreak assessment on 17 June 2024](#), we reported on High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza (HPAI) H7 in the State of Victoria in southern Australia. To 17 June 2024 there were a total of 6 poultry farms affected of which 5 were HPAI H7N3 and 1 was HPAI H7N9. Since then, 2 outbreaks of HPAI H7N8 have been reported in poultry in the State of New South Wales together with two further outbreaks of HPAI H7N3 in Victoria. There has also been an outbreak of HPAI H7N8 in Canberra in the Australian Capital Territory, taking the total of H7 outbreaks to 11 as confirmed on World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) (to 30 June 2024). The risk to poultry in Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales) of HPAI H7N8, H7N9 and H7N3 from Australia is still assessed as **negligible**.



Map Prepared by IDM Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in Poultry, Captive and Wild Birds*
Date: 01/07/2024
Absolute Scale: May to June 2024
Overlay: migratory bird flyways
(* WOAHA Data Only)

Map 1. High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza H7 outbreaks in poultry in Australia from 1 May 2024 to 30 June 2024. Showing a small number of reports in the south-east of the country.

Situation assessment

Two outbreaks of HPAI H7N8 have been reported in New South Wales in southern Australia in the media (Anon 2024a) and subsequently confirmed on WOA. On 17 June 2024, HPAI H7N8 was detected on a mixed free-range and barn commercial egg layer poultry farm with 235,000 birds in Freemans Reach in New South Wales. There were 24,000 clinically affected birds and the outbreak was reported to WOA on 20 June 2024. On 20 June 2024 a second outbreak of HPAI H7N8 was detected in New South Wales in a flock of 87,000 free range boilers in Glossodia.

Since our previous outbreak assessment, another 2 outbreaks of HPAI H7N3 have been reported on WOA, in Victoria. HPAI H7N3 was detected on 13 June 2024 in an indoor barn layer poultry farm in Lethbridge. The farm had 174,000 birds of which 2,004 were clinically affected. On 23 June 2024, HPAI H7N3 was detected on a farm in Lethbridge with 114 clinically affected birds in a flock of 42,076 free range laying poultry. This brings the total number of outbreaks in the state of Victoria to 8 (to 30 June 2024) with 5 H7N3 and 1 H7N9 outbreaks reported in our previous outbreak assessment. This is confirmed by Victoria Agriculture (2024) with 7 properties infected with HPAI H7N3 near Meredith and 1 property infected with HPAI H7N9 near Terang.

Further media reports on 27 June 2024 suggested an 11th property was affected (Anon 2024b), this time in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) which is an enclave completely within the state of New South Wales and includes Canberra. This was detected according to WOA on 24 June 2024 and confirmed on 28 June 2024 with 25,000 clinically affected cases in a flock of 170,000 barn egg layers in Belconnen.

The total number of HPAI H7 outbreaks confirmed in Australia on WOA is 11 (to 30 June 2024).

Implications for Great Britain

Direct routes of transmission of HPAI virus from Australia to Great Britain through wild bird migrations do not exist. Transmission from poultry back to wild birds is considered unlikely to occur, and there may be resistance to the H7 viruses in wild birds in the local area in Victoria, since the virus is considered likely to have originated from wild birds. Spread of H7 northwards from Australia through migrating wild birds, wader species in particular, into south-east Asia and even Siberia could occur next spring, leading theoretically to HPAI H7 eventually spreading westwards into northern Europe and Great Britain. However, this would take a period of years and multiple exchanges of virus between different wild bird populations across the northern hemisphere. China has reported 27 outbreaks of H7N9 in poultry in the recent past (2017 and 2018) with one outbreak in the USA in 2017. To date northern Europe and Great Britain have not reported incursions of H7N9 in poultry. Currently it is considered that the risk of HPAI H7 entering Great Britain through wild birds

directly or indirectly from Australia is negligible. HPAI H7 can be transmitted via fomites on contaminated equipment, vehicles and people, but it is considered a highly unlikely route that any contaminated equipment is entering and being utilised on farms in Great Britain. Given there are only 11 outbreaks to date, the probability of entry of HPAI H7 through fomite transmission through human air travel (on shoes and clothing for example) is considered negligible. Other routes of entry of Australian HPAI H7 virus into Great Britain to consider are via trade in live poultry and poultry products from affected farms in Victoria. Trade in live poultry from Australia is negligible. Whilst Australia is listed to export poultry meat, meat products, live poultry and hatching eggs to Great Britain, imports were already restricted before the HPAI H7 outbreaks because Australia does not have an approved Residue Control Plan (RCP) for poultry meat or an approved Salmonella Control Programme (SCP) for live poultry and hatching eggs. Australia was approved to export ratite meat and live ratites including ratite hatching eggs to Great Britain and these have now been restricted. It is considered that the probability of HPAI H7 entering Great Britain through imported meat and poultry products is currently negligible.

Conclusion

The transmission of high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) H7 in poultry is ongoing in south-east Australia with 11 outbreaks in egg-laying poultry to date (30 June 2024). These include 1 outbreak of H7N9 and 7 outbreaks of H7N3 in Victoria, 2 outbreaks of H7N8 in New South Wales and 1 outbreak of H7N8 in Canberra. The probability of the HPAI H7 virus entering Great Britain through wild birds from Australia is still assessed as **negligible**. The probability of entry of HPAI H7 virus through other routes including trade and fomites is also considered **negligible**. HPAI H5N1 virus is still being sporadically reported in wild birds and poultry in Europe and the risk of entry to Great Britain is considered separately from the HPAI H7 discussed here in Australia, with slightly higher risk levels (Defra 2024).

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References

All outbreaks and cases were taken from the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH).

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