Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Updated Outbreak Assessment #6

High pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) in Great Britain and Europe

10 March 2026

Disease report

In our previous outbreak assessment on 27 February 2026 (HPAI in Europe #5 February 2026) we noted that the number of cases of high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) H5 in wild birds was slowly falling from the peak in December although the wild bird risk level in Great Britain was still considered to be very high. Since then, there have been 24 more cases of HPAI H5 clade 2.3.4.4b events involving “found-dead” wild birds (number based on laboratory testing date) in Great Britain though the number of reports week-on-week has continued to decrease, albeit slowly, since the peak of over 100 per week in mid-December 2025 (Figure 2). The total number of wild bird cases in Great Britain since the start of the HPAI season on 1 October 2025 is now 880. Of these 880, 863 have been confirmed as HPAI H5N1,13 as HPAI H5Nx and 4 as HPAI H5N5 (see Map 2 for wild bird cases).

Since our previous outbreak assessment on 27 February 2026, there has been 1 report of HPAI H5 clade 2.3.4.4b in domestic poultry (pheasants) in Great Britain with the report being in England. The confirmed infected premises (IP) was located in North Yorkshire. There have been no more IPs in Scotland and Wales (see Map 1). The report has been confirmed as HPAI H5N1. The average number of IPs per week in Great Britain is now less than 1 over the last few weeks (Figure 1). On this basis the risk level for poultry with sub-optimal biosecurity in Great Britain is lowered from high (medium uncertainty) to MEDIUM (occurs regularly) with high uncertainty.

The decrease in the risk to poultry with suboptimal biosecurity is consistent with a reduction in the wild bird infection pressure on poultry. The number of migratory waterbirds overwintering in Great Britain will have peaked in December and January and migratory waterbirds are now (mid-March) not expected to fly over to Great Britain from northern Europe, where positive reports of HPAI H5 have also continued, if not increased slightly since our previous assessment. However, movement of waterbirds within Great Britain at this time of year as the birds prepare to move from their wintering sites towards their breeding sites could see an increase in reports of HPAI H5 particularly in the north as migratory geese fly north in preparation for their departure to Iceland and Greenland.

Although there have been 24 new detections in wild birds based on test date since our previous assessment on 27 February 2026, there have only been 11 new detections based on collection date, which is the more important date for assessing trends. On the basis of these 11 HPAI H5N1 positive cases in “found-dead” wild birds collected in Great Britain since our previous outbreak assessment, there appears to be a shift in the species of wild birds affected with fewer resident water birds but more gulls and auks together with a high proportion of raptors. This is further supported by analysis of the monthly trends in wild bird groups (Table 1) which shows a steady fall in the percentages of cases in resident geese and resident swans, but a marked increase in the percentages of gulls and seabirds in February in Great Britain. This decrease in wild bird cases and the apparent shift in wild bird species away from waterbirds, the lack of inward migration, the increase in daylight hours which are less suitable for virus survivability together with the decrease in the risk levels for poultry supports a reduction in the wild bird risk level in Great Britain from very high to HIGH.

It should be noted that the ‘high’ risk level (event occurs very often) in wild birds is still very much a concern and that implementing and maintaining biosecurity measures to prevent exposure of poultry and other kept birds to the infectious agent are of great importance.

The risk level in Great Britain for HPAI H5 incursion in poultry:

- With stringent biosecurity is maintained at LOW with medium uncertainty; and
- With non-stringent or suboptimal biosecurity is decreased from high with medium uncertainty to MEDIUM with high uncertainty.

Situation assessment

Here, an HPAI H5Nx event refers to a report of HPAI in poultry, or a location with at least 1 HPAI H5Nx positive wild bird. Individual HPAI H5Nx positive wild birds are referred to as cases.

United Kingdom

Poultry Infected Premises

Since our last outbreak assessment on 27 February 2026 there has been just 1 new Infected Premises (IP) confirmed with HPAI H5N1 in poultry (to 9 March 2026). This was a flock of 22,000 pheasants in North Yorkshire in England (see Map 1 for approximate location). The number of IPs per week has fallen week on week since the peak of 14 per week in early November 2025 to on average less than 1 per week in February to early March (see Figure 1).

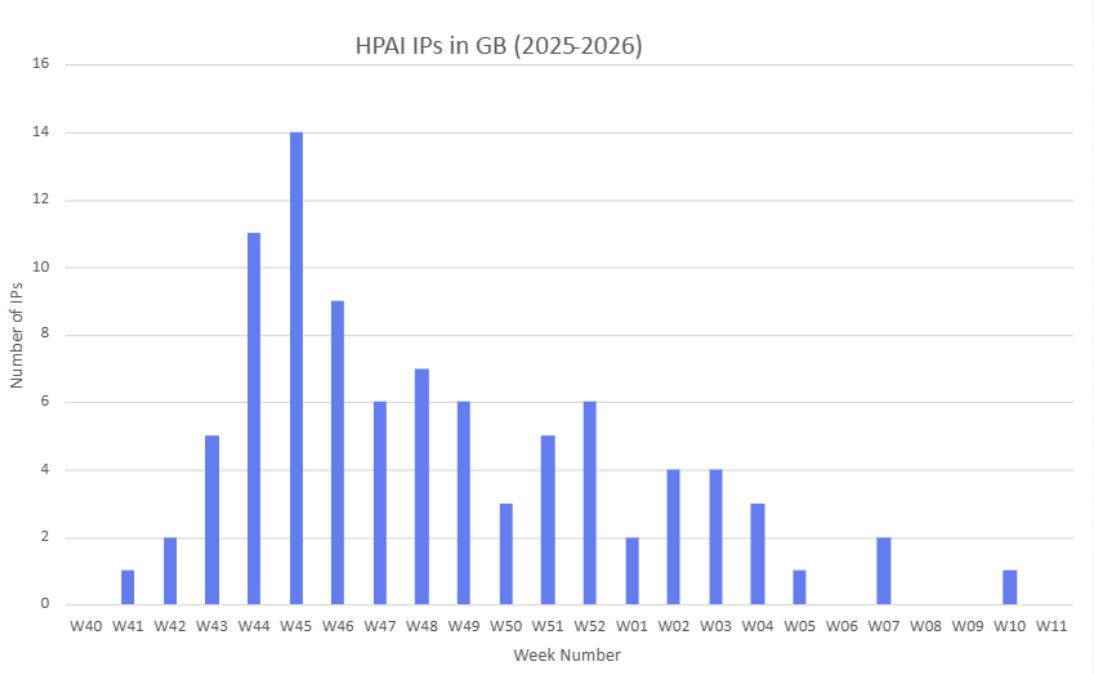
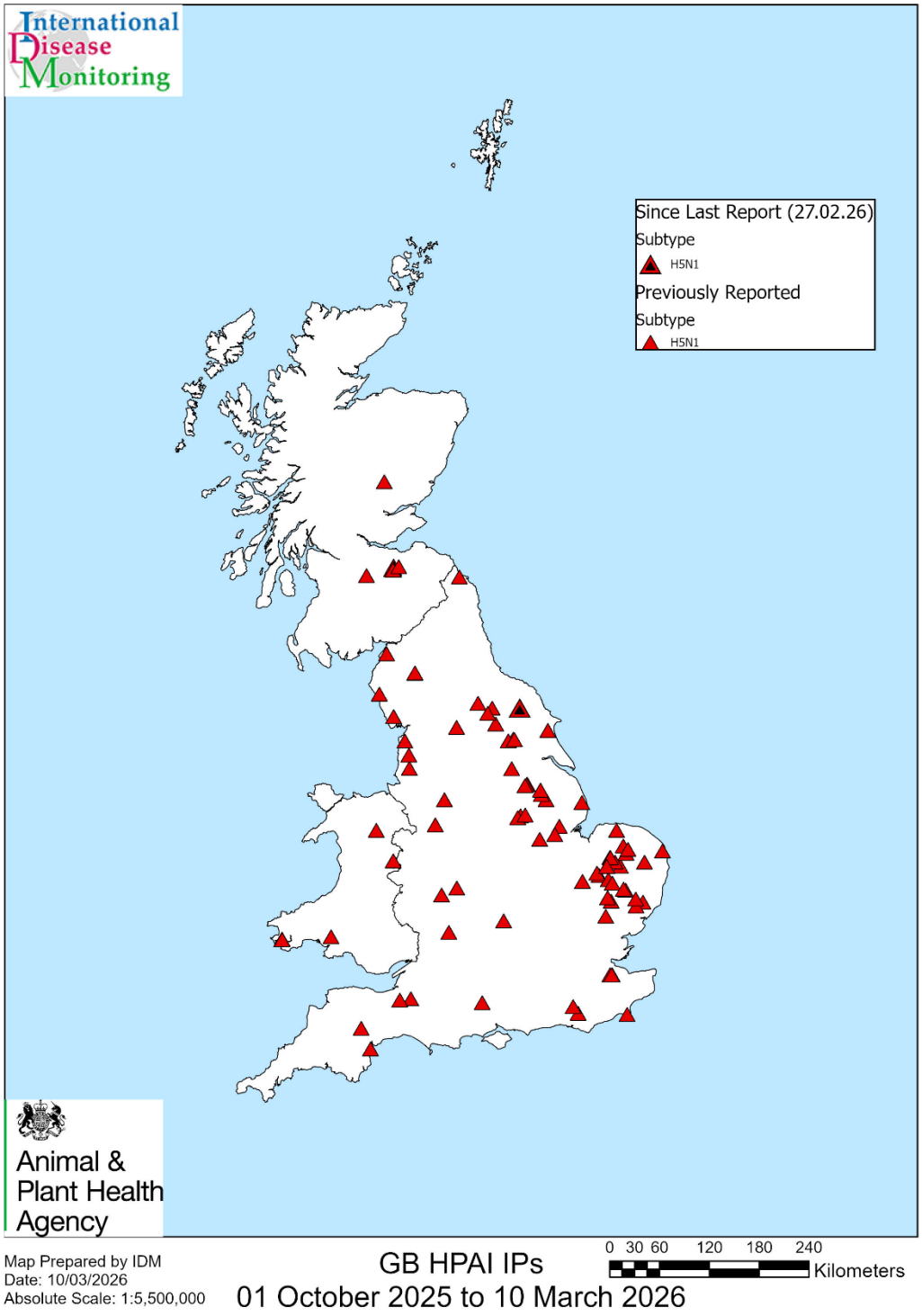


Figure 1: Number of HPAI H5N1-infected premises (IPs) in Great Britain each week from 28 September to 10 March 2026. Graph shows the weekly number of IPs reducing from a peak of 14 per week in week 45 to less than 1 per week on average in February and March.

As of 00:01 on 6 November 2025, a mandatory housing order to cover the whole of England was introduced for poultry flocks of more than 50 birds or those that sell or give away eggs or poultry products (National Housing Order declared to protect poultry from Avian Influenza - GOV.UK). From 00:01 13 November 2025, mandatory housing measures were introduced in Wales. This is a legal requirement for all keepers of 50 or more birds of any species and those with flocks of less than 50 birds if eggs or poultry products are sold or given away. An Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ) remains in place across Scotland.

An AIPZ was introduced in Northern Ireland from 00:01 on Saturday 1 November 2025. Following 2 confirmations of HPAI H5N1 in County Tyrone and County Fermanagh, mandatory housing measures for all kept birds and poultry came in to force in Northern Ireland from 00:01, 6 November. There is also a ban on Galliformes and Anseriformes gatherings.

For updates on the latest situation in England please see Gov.uk.



Map 1. Showing HPAI H5Nx Infected Premises across Great Britain from 1 October 2025 to 10 March 2026. The black triangle with the red border is the IP since our last report (27 February 2026) as discussed in body of report.

Wild birds

The weekly number of HPAI H5-positive wild bird cases in Great Britain is shown in Figure 2. Between 27 February 2026 and 10 March 2026 (based on laboratory testing date), HPAI H5 has been detected in 24 found-dead wild birds, including 15 wild bird species (data available https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/avian-influenza-in-wild-birds), across 18 counties. The 24 positive wild bird cases since 27 February were collected from both inland and coastal locations with fewer positive cases in the south-west or south of England but more in Scotland and northern England (Map 2). In total there were 11 in England, 13 in Scotland and 0 in Wales (based on laboratory testing date).

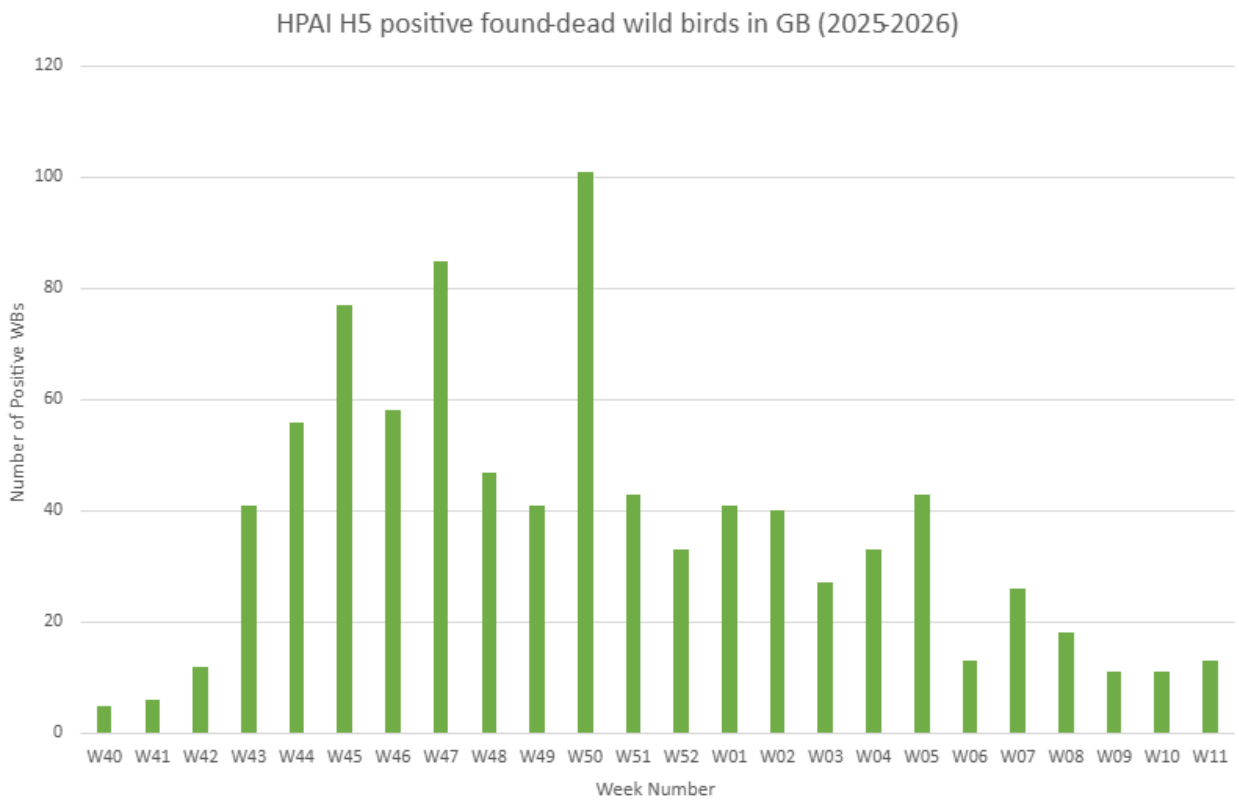
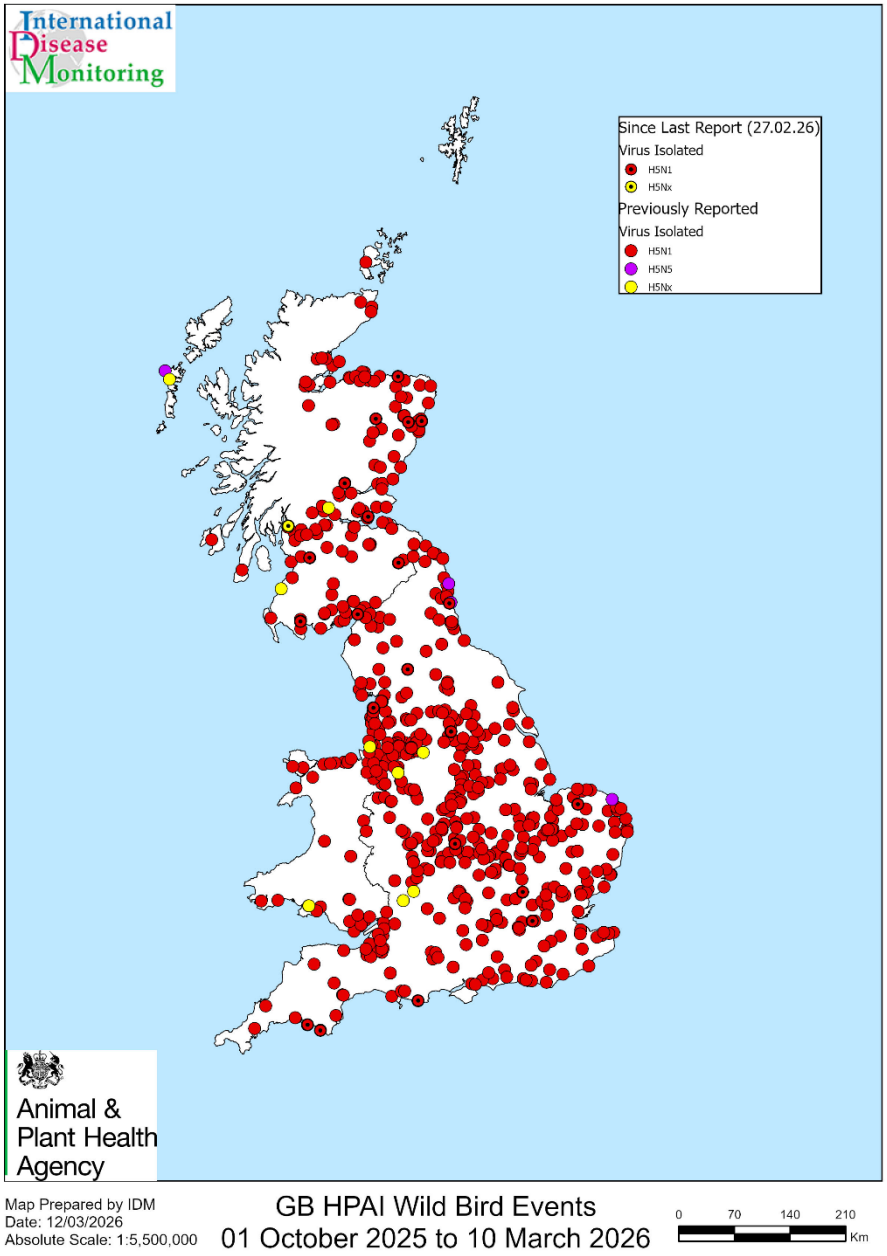


Figure 2: Detections per week of HPAI H5 positive found-dead wild birds in Great Britain since 28 September 2025 to 10 March 2026 (based on test date).

It should be noted that there is a variable lag period between the collection of found-dead wild birds to sampling, testing, and the reporting of results.

It is important to note that these surveillance figures for Great Britain are based on passive surveillance of found dead birds reported to Defra by the general public and as such, may be affected by several factors including frequency of visitors accessing areas with bird populations, the potential for immunity in the wild bird population (which may result in fewer birds developing clinical disease and or dying with HPAI), variable surveillance system sensitivity, as well as the size, location and accessibility of carcasses, meaning that this wild bird surveillance does not necessarily capture all of the cases that occur. We will continue to monitor the situation closely. For further details, please see the report

(updated weekly) on findings of HPAI in wild birds in Great Britain and HPAI in wild birds in Northern Ireland.



Map 2. Wild bird positive detections for HPAI reports across Great Britain from 1 October 2025 to 10 March 2026 (based on laboratory testing date). Circles with a dot inside are wild bird positive detections since our previous assessment on 27 February 2026 and those without are before 27 February 2026. The map shows most new cases in the north of Great Britain discussed in body of report.

Non-avian wildlife

Since 27 February 2026, there have been no further positive HPAI H5 detections in non-avian wildlife in Great Britain.

For further details and for previously reported detections in non-avian wildlife, please see the report on [findings of HPAI in non-avian wildlife in Great Britain.]

Europe

Between 26 February and 09 March 2026 there were a total of 195 HPAI H5 events in domestic poultry, captive birds and non-poultry including wild birds across Europe reported by the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH). Of these reports on WOAH, 160 were in wild birds, 7 in non-commercial poultry and 28 were poultry outbreaks. All reports were HPAI H5N1 except for 1 case of HPAI H5Nx in wild birds in Belgium. Positive reports according to data from IZSVe (2025) have roughly doubled in late February compared to January with around 300 reports per week as shown in Figure 3. Reports continue to be dominated by the wild bird cases.

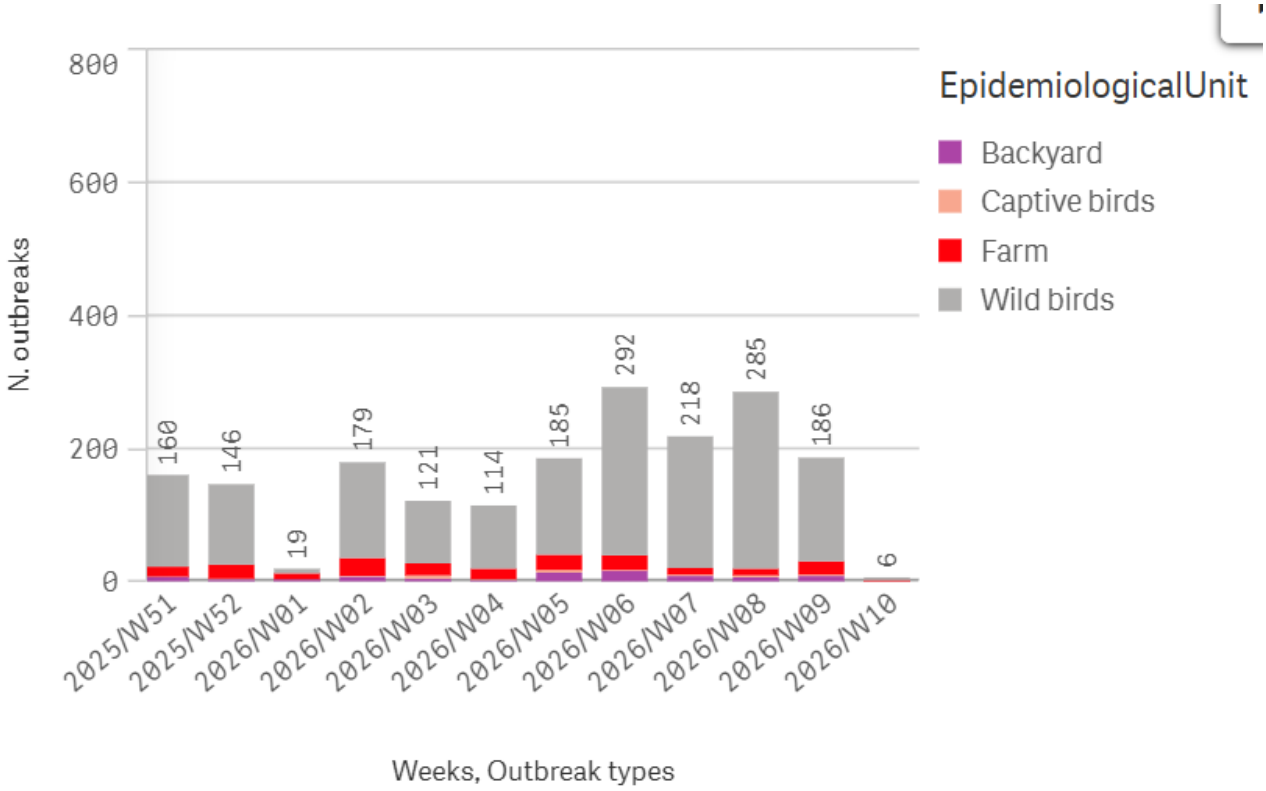
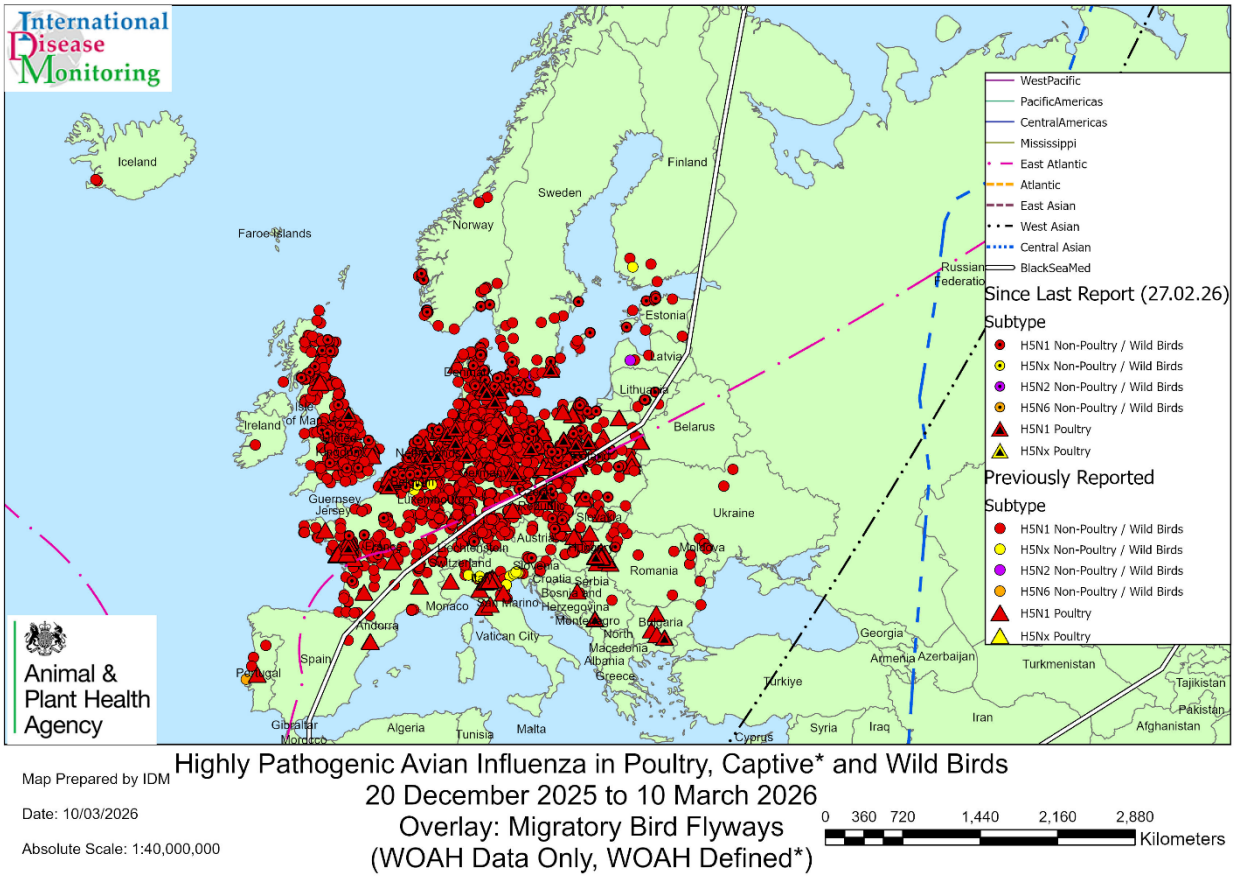


Figure 3: Weekly numbers of HPAI H5 positive reports in Europe according to data from IZSVe (2026) from December 2025 to 10 March 2026. The figure shows levels fluctuating at around 150 positive reports per week through late December and into February with an increase in mid-February to nearer 300 reports per week. Wild bird cases in grey account for the major proportion relative to the poultry outbreaks in red and purple as discussed in the text. It should be noted there will be more reports to follow for week 10.

Large numbers of wild bird cases in Europe are still being reported on ADIS (2026). In the week to 04 March 2026, there were 213 wild bird cases in Germany reported on ADIS (2026) with 42 in Poland, 15 in the Netherlands, 12 in Belgium, 10 both in Denmark and Norway, and 11 in Sweden. Also on ADIS in the week to 04 March 2026, there were 7

poultry outbreaks in Germany, 5 in Bulgaria, 2 in Poland and singles in the Netherlands, Bosnia, Sweden, Hungary, France, Denmark and Czechia.



Map 3. HPAI events in domestic poultry and wild birds in Europe reported by WOAH between 20 December 2025 and 09 March 2026 (WOAH, 2026). Wild bird cases and poultry outbreaks continue across most of northern and central Europe with only southern Europe now relatively unaffected as described in the main body of this report.

Map 3 shows the HPAI H5 reports from WOAH across Europe from 20 December 2025 to 09 March 2026 with those since 27 February 2026 discerned with black dots in the centre. Despite large numbers of HPAI events in northern and eastern Europe, it appears that HPAI H5 is clearing from the south-west of Europe with no cases in the Iberian Peninsula, southern France or Italy since 27 February 2026. Large numbers of wild bird cases are still being reported on WOAH since the 27 February 2026 (to 09 March 2026) in European countries including Poland (58), the Netherlands (21), Belgium (19), Denmark (14), Norway (13), and Sweden (11) with fewer cases in Austria, Czechia, Estonia, France, Hungary, Slovakia, Lithuania and Estonia. Germany has not reported any wild bird cases to WOAH in this period. Wild bird species reported in Europe are still predominantly large numbers of waterbirds and raptors, including 53 geese and 42 mute swans.

Germany is still reporting relatively high numbers of poultry outbreaks with 8 on WOAH since 27 February 2026 (to 09 March 2026). In addition, there were 6 poultry outbreaks in Poland, 5 each in Denmark and France, and 4 in the Czech Republic.

Implications for Great Britain

Wild bird cases continue in Europe (Figure 3) although migratory ducks, geese and swans will not be flying into Great Britain from northern Europe at this time of year (mid-March). Wild bird cases were reported across much of Great Britain through the winter but have started to clear from the south of England and Wales since our previous assessment with more of the cases in northern England and Scotland (see Map 2). Since our previous assessment on 27 February 2026 (HPAI in Europe #5 February 2026) there have been a further 10 wild bird cases collected in February and 1 migratory goose (pink-footed goose) in March. The 10 wild bird cases in February include 2 more gulls (herring gull and black-headed gull), 3 raptors, 1 mute swan and four seabirds (namely 2 razorbills, 1 guillemot and 1 cormorant). The species of wild birds affected in Great Britain since 1 October 2025 are collated according to group for each month in Table 1 to show the monthly trends.

Table 1: Monthly numbers (and percentages) of wild bird cases of HPAI H5Nx according to bird group in Great Britain collected from 1 October 2025 to 09 March 2026. These are based on collection date (not test date) to give information on monthly trends in wild bird cases.

Wild bird group	October	November	December	January	February	March
Gamebird	3 (1.9%)	18 (6.5%)	3 (1.3%)	0	0	0
Gull	7 (4.4%)	18 (6.5%)	8 (3.4%)	4 (3.1%)	7 (12.3%)	0
Heron	1 (0.6%)	0	0	0	0	0
Migrant goose/Duck	16 (10.0%)	23 (8.3%)	28 (11.9%)	11 (8.6%)	5 (8.8%)	1 (100%)
Migrant swan	7 (4.4%)	22 (7.9%)	7 (3.0%)	1 (0.8%)	0	0
Owl	0	2 (0.7%)	0	3 (2.3%)	1 (1.8%)	0
Pigeon	3 (1.9%)	1 (0.4%)	1 (0.4%)	3 (2.3%)	0	0
Raptor	10 (6.4%)	17 (6.1%)	32 (13.6%)	26 (20.3%)	14 (24.6%)	0
Resident goose, ducks	49 (30.6%)	56 (20.2%)	70 (29.7%)	34 (26.6%)	8 (14.0%)	0
Resident swan	63 (39.4%)	117 (42.2%)	83 (35.2%)	46 (35.9%)	16 (28.1%)	0
Seabird	1 (0.6%)	0	1 (0.4%)	0	6 (10.5%)	0
Wader	0	3 (1.1%)	3 (1.3%)	0	0	0
Total	**160**	**277**	**236**	**128**	**57**	**1**

Since November and December when monthly wild bird cases were at around 250 per month in Great Britain, the total number of cases has halved in January and then halved again in February to 57 (Table 1). Taken together with the small number of poultry IPs in the last month (Figure 1) and the longer day lengths (allowing more solar radiation) with higher temperatures in March, the wild bird risk level in Great Britain is reduced from very high to HIGH. It is also noted that in the last 11 cases (albeit a small sample size) since our previous outbreak assessment, there were only 2 waterbirds, but 3 cases in auks and 2 cases in gulls, including a black-headed gull in Great Britain. Of considerable significance is the fall in the proportion of cases in resident geese and ducks which accounted for almost 30% of wild bird cases in December but down to 14% in February in Great Britain (Table 1). The proportion of cases in resident (mainly mute) swans in Great Britain has also fallen steadily month on month from the peak of 42% in November to 28% in February. Of interest the proportion of gull cases in wild birds has increased from 3% in December to January to 12% in February (see Table 1). Similarly, seabird cases have increased in percentage terms in February (see Table 1). It is too early to determine whether this represents a long-term shift to gulls and seabirds as a prelude to HPAI H5N1's over-summering in Great Britain in 2026. It is noted that in Europe, there were 13 gull cases in the 157 wild bird cases detected in February and March and reported to WOAH since 27 February 2026 (to 09 March 2026). These account for 8.2% of the wild bird cases in Europe. However, there were no seabird cases in Europe over this period except 1 case in a common eider duck.

Also of note is the increase in the percentage of cases in raptors at almost 25% in February in Great Britain (Table 1). Raptors, being scavengers of wild bird carcasses, are good sentinels of infection in wild birds, and typically increase in percentage terms at the end of an outbreak as they search out the remaining infected wild bird carcases. Interestingly the percentage of cases in migrant geese (for example pink-footed goose and barnacle goose) has remained relatively constant at around 10% each month (Table 1). These remaining migratory waterfowl will be departing Great Britain in the next few weeks.

In our previous assessment on 27 February 2026 (HPAI in Europe #5 February 2026) the risk level in Great Britain for poultry with stringent biosecurity was reduced from medium (low uncertainty) to LOW with medium uncertainty. With on average around just 1 poultry IP per week in Great Britain through February and into March (Figure 1), together with the decreasing number of reports in wild birds, the risk to poultry with suboptimal biosecurity is now reduced from high (medium uncertainty) to MEDIUM (high uncertainty).

With the dispersion of the wintering aggregates of resident waterbirds within Great Britain together with the departure of the migratory waterbirds in the next few weeks, it is anticipated that the wild bird risk will fall further although it is not known whether HPAI H5 will over-summer this year, and if so, in which species of wild birds.

Conclusion

Since our previous assessment on 27 February 2026 (HPAI in Europe #5 February 2026), cases of HPAI H5Nx in wild birds in Great Britain have continued albeit at much lower levels than in December (Figure 2). Wild bird cases are continuing at high levels in Europe (Figure 3) particularly in Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands. At this time of year (mid-March), it is very unlikely that any wild migratory waterfowl would fly from Continental Europe into Great Britain. There appears to be a shift in the species of wild bird affected from resident waterfowl to gulls and auks in Great Britain based on the 11 wild bird positive samples collected in late February to early March. This shift is further supported by the monthly trends in groups of wild bird cases presented in Table 1, with the percentage of cases in resident ducks, geese and swans falling in February, but the percentage in gulls and seabird increasing. Although too early in the year to predict whether these trends will continue, in previous years such shifts have taken the pressure off poultry which is consistent with the number of poultry IPs falling to around less than 1 IP per week in Great Britain since our previous assessment (see Figure 1). The risk to poultry with sub-optimal biosecurity is therefore reduced from high (medium uncertainty) to MEDIUM (high uncertainty). This follows the reduction in the risk level for poultry with stringent biosecurity to low as set out in our previous assessment on 27 February 2026.

Although the wild bird risk level in Great Britain is now reduced from very high to HIGH, reflecting the fall in wild bird cases and the apparent shift in wild bird species, good biosecurity practices remain of utmost importance for poultry keepers.

See the interactive map for details and check the declarations for details of the restrictions.

We are continuing to closely monitor the situation both in Great Britan in Europe and to review the risk.

It is important that stringent adherence to good biosecurity practices is maintained.

Advice for working with birds

Reinforcement of good biosecurity awareness behaviours and practices should be frequently communicated to all personnel working with birds.

Any lapse of these measures could result in disease being introduced to poultry and captive birds.

This could be by direct or indirect contact with wild birds.

Direct contact includes wild birds getting into housing or onto the range.

Indirect contact with wild birds includes faecal contamination of:

- feed

- water
- bedding
- equipment
- vermin
- 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
- Northern Ireland is available on DAERA's website

The WOAH, Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) International Reference Laboratory and the UK National Reference Laboratory at Weybridge have the necessary diagnostic capability for strains of avian influenza virus, whether of low or high pathogenicity, and continually monitor changes in the virus on a global scale, whilst utilising international networks to gain early insights into 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 dead wild birds f should be reported online (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/report-dead-wild-birds) or to the Defra wild bird helpline on 03459 33 55 77.

It is advisable that you do not touch these birds.

Authors

- Dr Paul Gale
- Megan Arter-Hazzard
- Dr Sonny Bacigalupo
- Dr Lauren Perrin

References

All outbreaks and cases were taken from the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH). Please note that changes in format and level of detail are due to the change of data source for this report, from EU's Animal Disease Notification System (ADNS) to World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH).

ADIS (2026) Animal Disease Information System (ADIS) - Food Safety.

IZSVe (2026) EURL Avian Flu Data Portal (izsvenezie.it)

WOAH (2026) WAHIS (woah.org)

This publication is available at https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/animal-diseases-international-monitoring.

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at iadm@apha.gov.uk.