

Updated Outbreak Assessment #8

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

26 May 2026

Disease report

In our previous outbreak assessment on 10 April 2026 ([HPAI Europe 10 April 2026](#)) the number of cases of high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) H5 in wild birds continued to fall with an increasing proportion of raptors following high numbers of cases over the winter. This downward trend has continued into April and May (Table 1). Since 10 April 2026, 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 (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 932. Of these 932, 916 have been confirmed as HPAI H5N1, 12 as HPAI H5Nx and 4 as HPAI H5N5 (see Map 2 for wild bird cases).

Although there have been 24 new detections in wild birds based on test date since our previous assessment on 10 April 2026, there have only been 13 new detections based on collection date which is the more important date for assessing trends. The 13 new cases based on collection date include 1 resident waterbird namely a mute swan in Aberdeen which is encouraging in terms of the continuing trend in the reduction in the number of cases in resident waterfowl. In previous years and in this year, HPAI cases in resident waterfowl appeared to be linked to poultry risk. Of the other 12 new wild bird detections based on collection date, 4 were migratory pink-footed geese which will now have all departed Great Britain for their breeding sites in Greenland and Iceland and 7 were raptors (6 buzzards and 1 goshawk). There were no new seabird cases but 1 case in a great black-backed gull in Northumberland. The number of wild bird cases has halved from 40 in March to 19 in April with just 1 so far in May. This decrease together with the apparent shift in wild bird species away from waterbirds, the lack of inward migration into Great Britain and the increase in temperature and daylight hours which are less suitable for virus survival in the environment support a reduction in the wild bird risk level in Great Britain from medium to LOW. It should be noted that the LOW risk level (rare but does occur) in wild birds does not mean no risk and that implementing and maintaining biosecurity measures to prevent exposure of poultry and other kept birds to the infectious agent remain important.

Since our previous outbreak assessment on 10 April 2026, there have been 4 confirmed detections of HPAI H5 clade 2.3.4.4b in domestic poultry in Great Britain with all 4 reports

in England; 3 of the confirmed infected premises (IPs) were in Lincolnshire and 1 in Cambridgeshire. All 4 IPs were confirmed as HPAI H5N1. The last IP with stringent biosecurity was on 01 December 2025. The last IP with suboptimal biosecurity was more than a month ago on 17 April 2026, which together with the falling wild bird risk, increases our confidence in the low risk level for poultry with suboptimal biosecurity. The risk level in Great Britain for HPAI H5 incursion in poultry:

- With stringent biosecurity is therefore maintained at LOW with low uncertainty; and
- With non-stringent or suboptimal biosecurity is maintained at LOW but the uncertainty is reduced from medium to low.

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 10 April 2026 ([HPAI Europe 10 April 2026](#)), there have been 4 new Infected Premises (IP) confirmed with HPAI H5N1 in poultry (to 26 May 2026). These include three flocks of permanently housed ducks Lincolnshire (with 3,800, 3,000 and 7,1000 ducks), and an outdoor flock of 700 pheasants and 25 chickens in Cambridgeshire (see Map 1 for approximate locations). 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 month in May 2026 (see Figure 1).

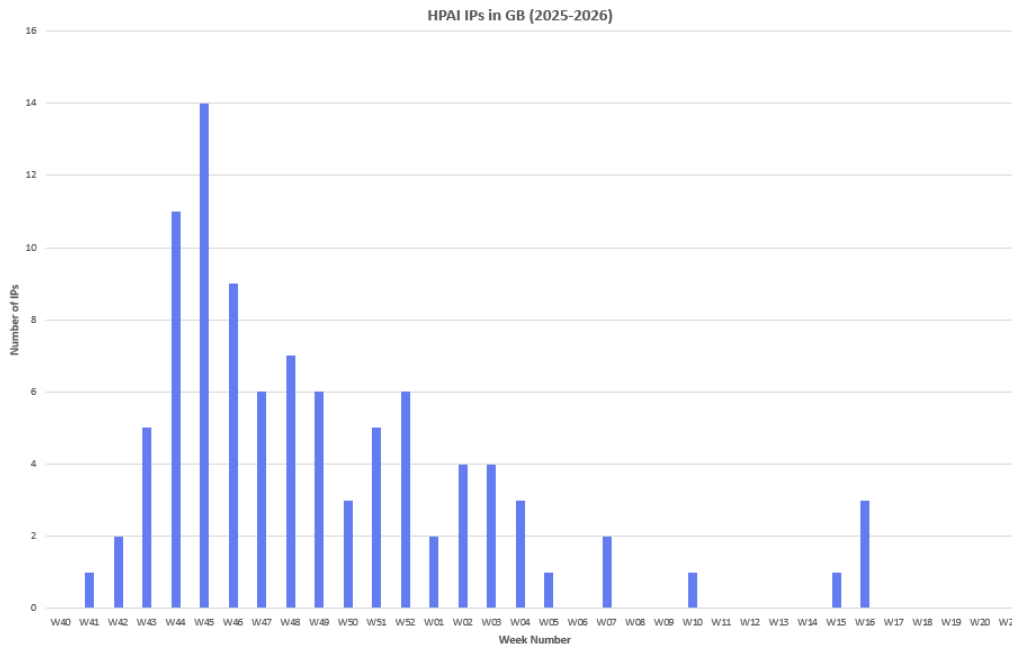
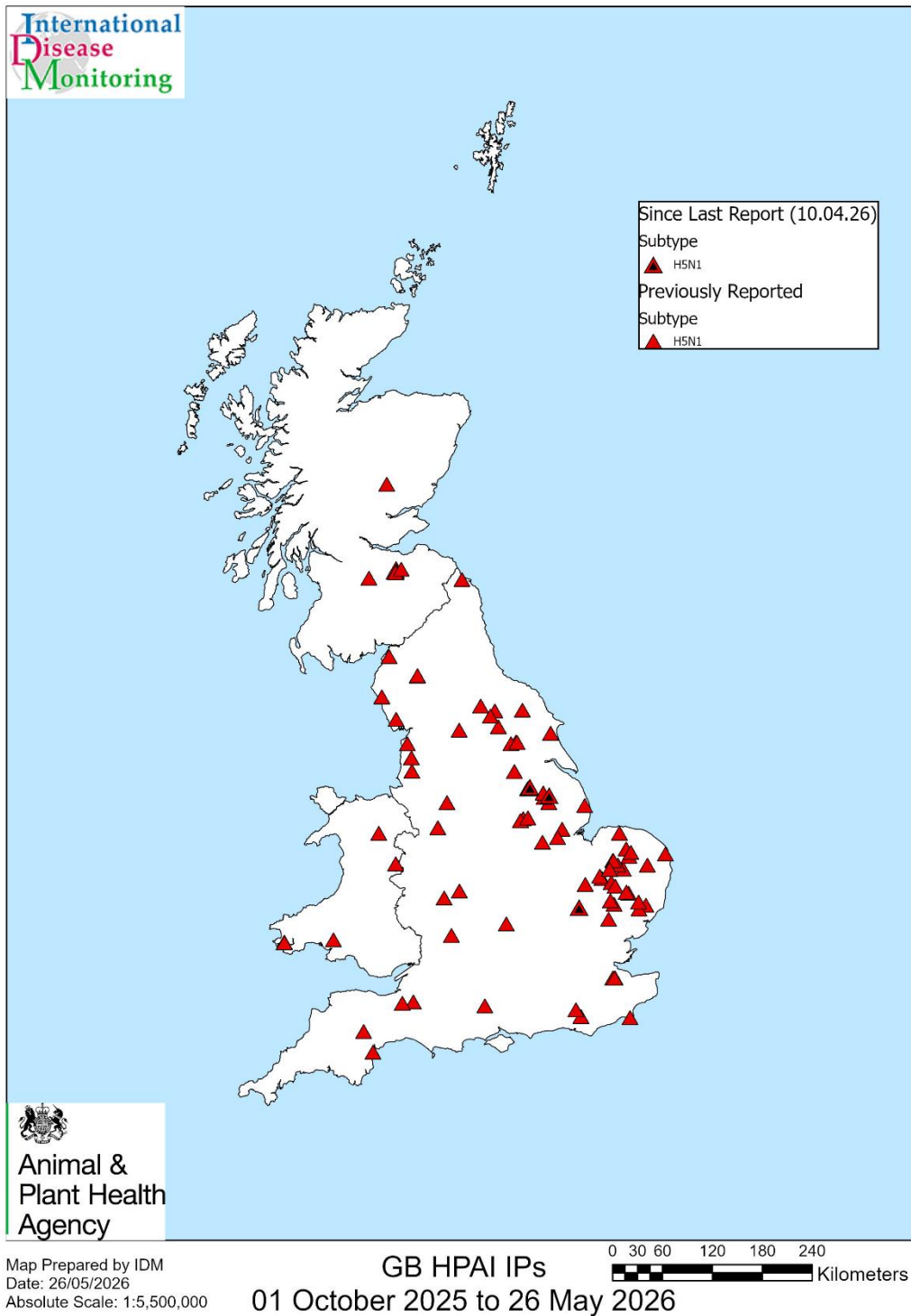


Figure 1: Number of HPAI H5N1-infected premises (IPs) in Great Britain each week from 28 September to 26 May 2026. Graph shows the weekly number of IPs reducing from a peak of 14 per week in early November 2025 to less than 1 per week on average in March and April 2026 and none so far in May 2026.

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](#)). On 13 November 2025, mandatory housing measures were introduced in [Wales](#). This was 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. The mandatory housing orders in [England](#) and [Wales](#) were lifted from 00.01 on 9 April 2026 except for premises in a protection zone or captive bird (monitoring) controlled zone. The Avian Influenza Prevention Zones (AIPZ) remains in place across England, Wales and [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 into force in Northern Ireland from 00:01, 6 November 2025. The housing order in Northern Ireland was lifted from 00.01, 5 May 2026. For updates on the latest situation in England please see [gov.uk](#).



Map 1. Showing HPAI H5Nx Infected Premises (IPs) across Great Britain from 1 October 2025 to 26 May 2026. The black triangles with red borders are the IPs since our last report (10 April 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 10 April 2026 and 26 May 2026 (based on laboratory testing date), HPAI H5

has been detected in 24 found-dead wild birds, including 9 wild bird species (data available <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/avian-influenza-in-wild-birds>), across 15 counties. The 24 positive wild bird cases since 10 April were collected from both inland and coastal locations with no positive cases in the south of England or Wales and all in Scotland or central and northern England (Map 2). In total, there were 20 in Scotland and 4 in England (based on laboratory testing date).

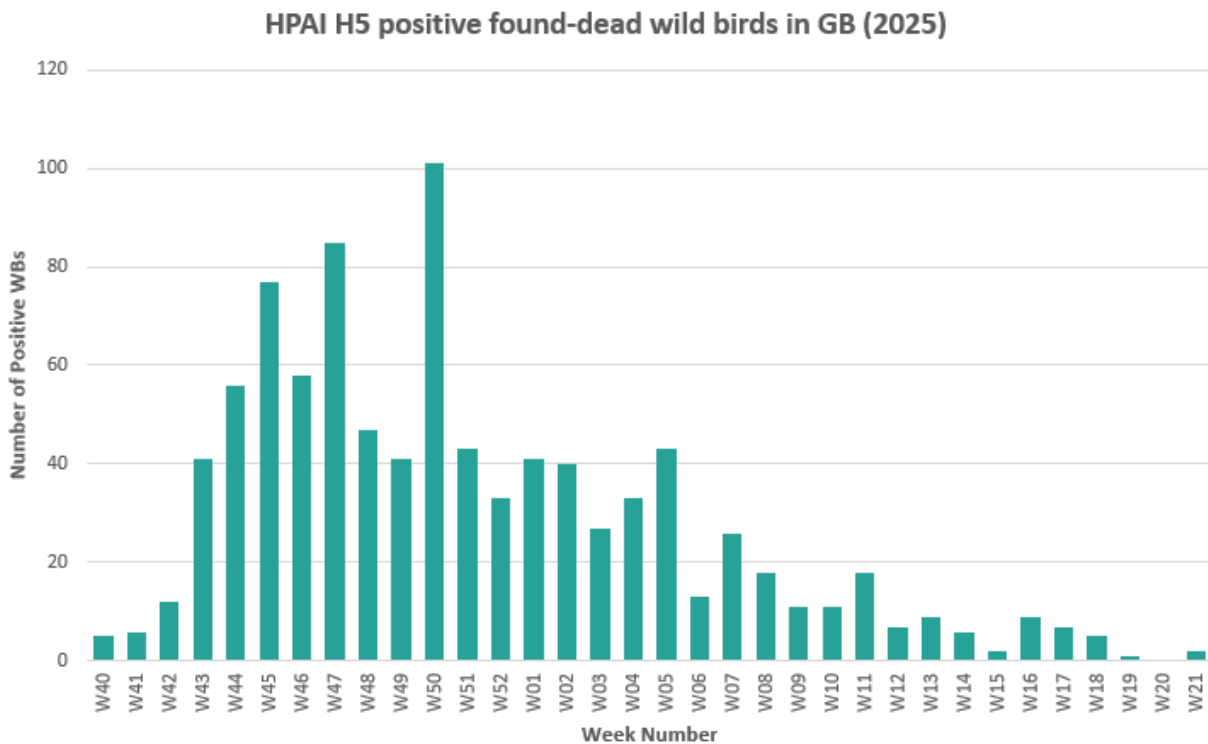
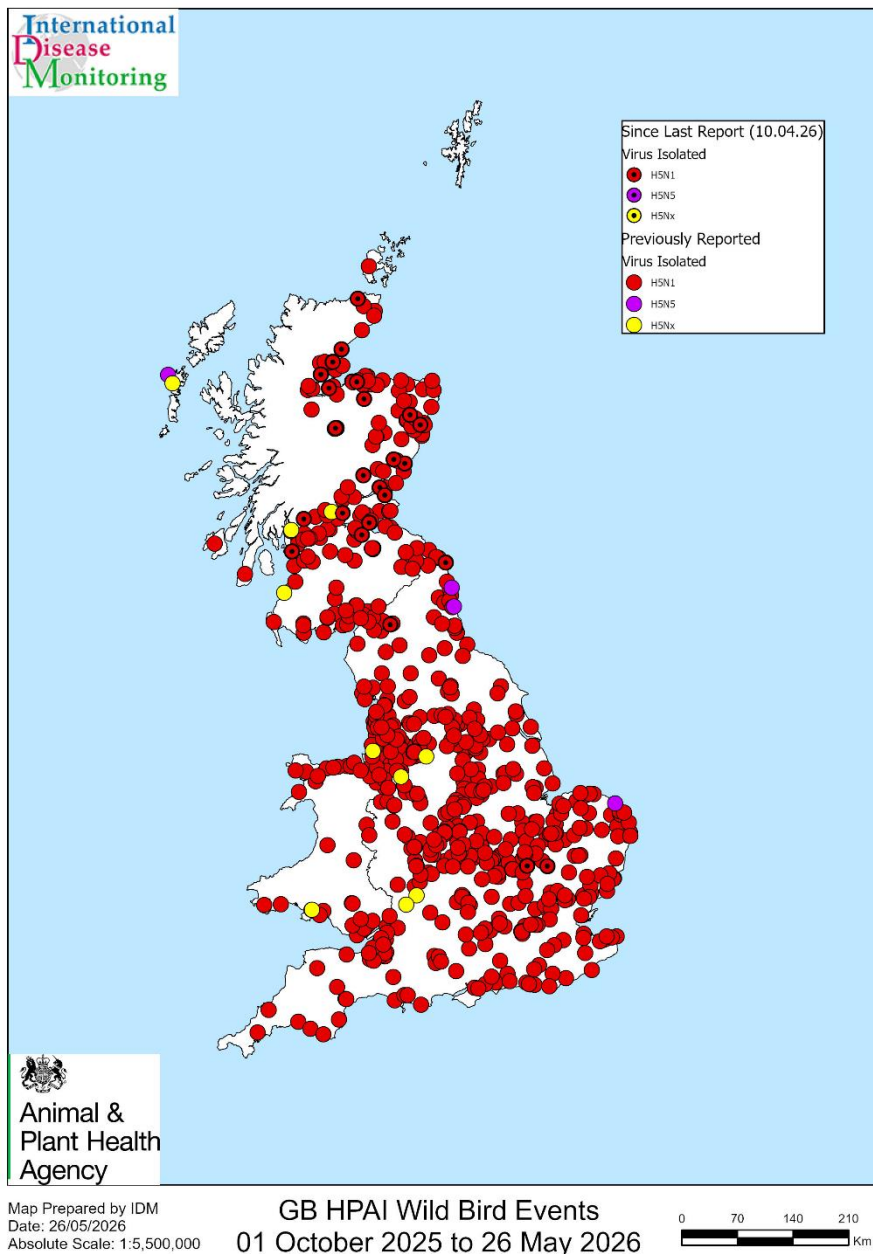


Figure 2: Detections per week of HPAI H5 positive found-dead wild birds in Great Britain since 28 September 2025 to 26 May 2026 (based on test date). The graph shows a steady decline in the number of detections per week from mid-December 2025 to May 2026.

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 11 March 2026 to 26 May 2026 (based on laboratory testing date). The symbols with black dots are the wild bird cases since our last report (10 April 2026). The map shows most new cases in the north of Great Britain discussed in body of report.

Non-avian wildlife

Since 10 April 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

The number of positive reports of HPAI H5 in Europe according to data from IZSVe (2026) continues to fall with fewer than 40 reports per week from early May in Figure 3. This is due to the fall in wild bird cases with the number of poultry farm outbreaks remaining more constant reflecting the situation in Poland where seven poultry outbreaks were reported on ADIS in the week to 20 May 2026.

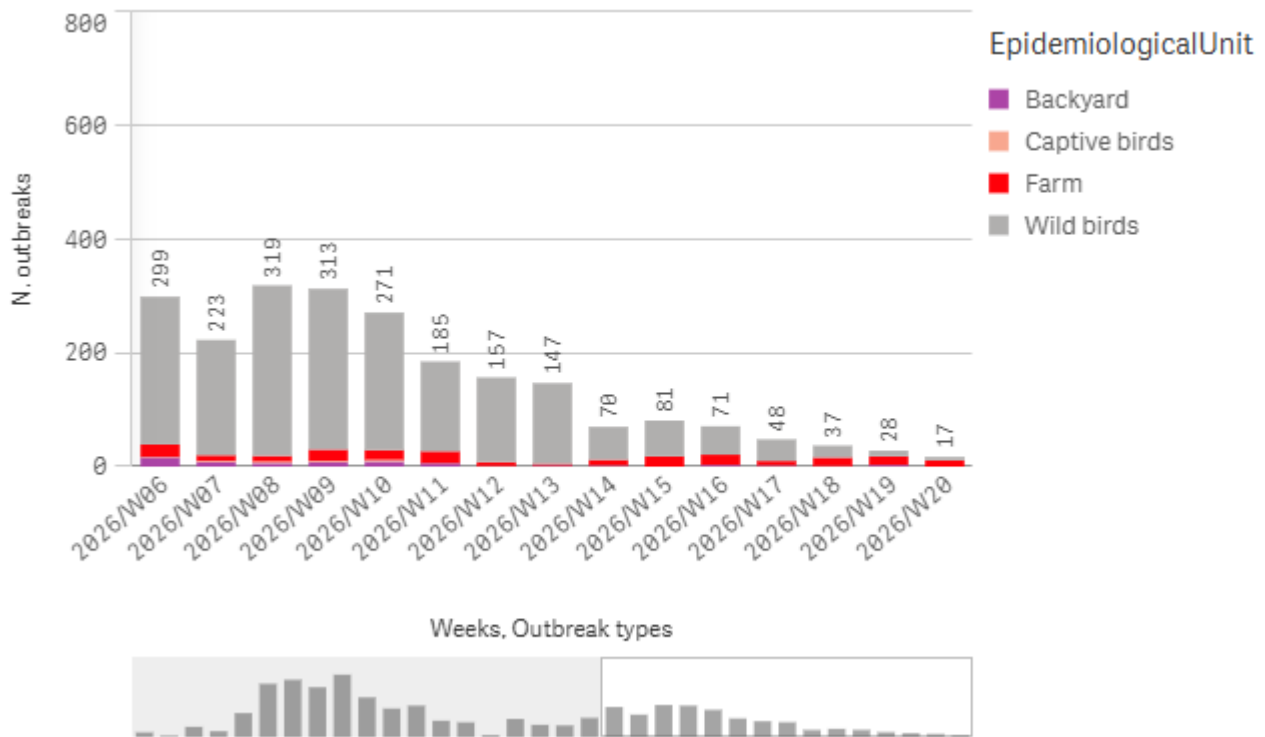
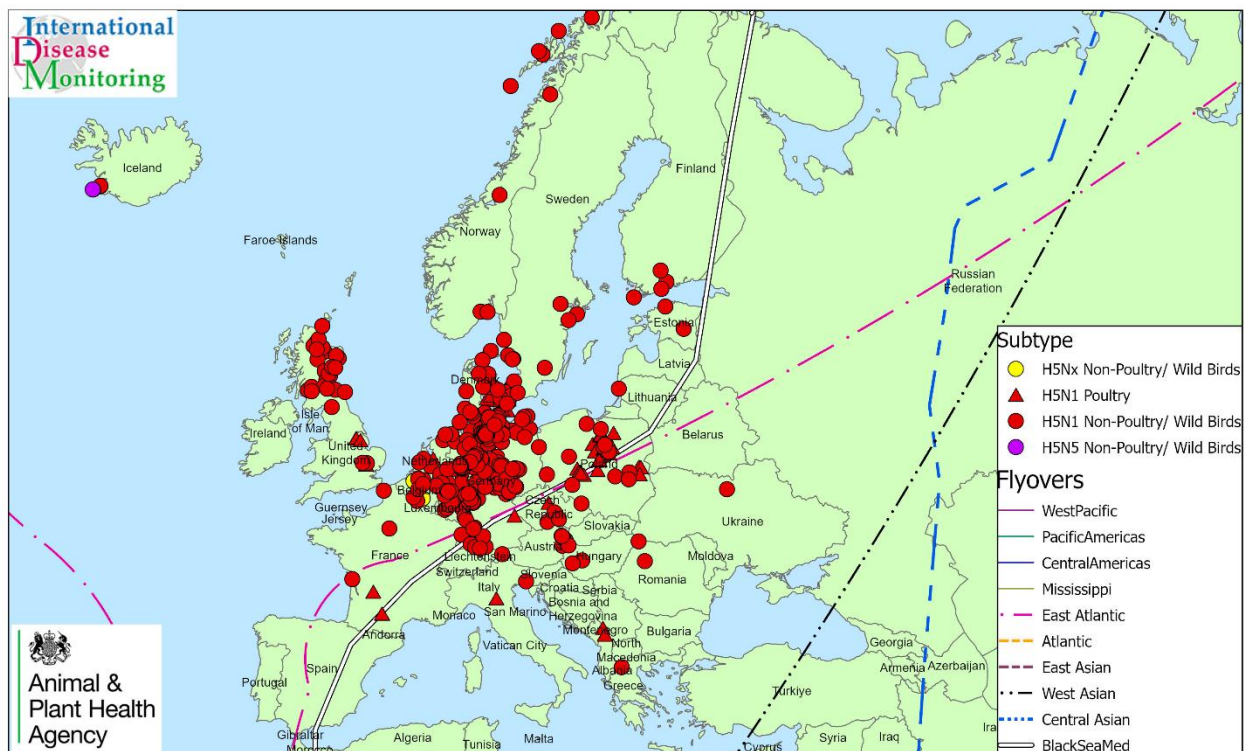


Figure 3: Weekly numbers of HPAI H5 positive reports in Europe according to data from IZSVe (2026) from February 2026 to 26 May 2026. The figure shows levels at over 300 positive reports per week in late February before decreasing to under 100 reports per week through April and less than 40 per week by mid-May. Wild bird cases in grey fell relative to the poultry outbreaks in red and purple as discussed in the text. It should be noted there may be more reports to follow for week 20.

The number of wild bird cases in Europe being reported on ADIS (2026) is also falling with 4 HPAI H5N1 cases reported in Poland and singles in Austria, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, the Netherlands and Norway in the week to 20 May 2026.



Map Prepared by IDM
 Date: 26/05/2026
 Absolute Scale: 1:40,000,000

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in Poultry, Captive* and Wild Birds
 11 April to 26 May 2026
 Overlay: Migratory Bird Flyways
 (WOAH Data Only, WOAH Defined*)

0 360 720 1,440 2,160 2,880 Kilometers

Map 3. HPAI events in domestic poultry and wild birds in Europe reported by WOA between 10 April 2026 and 26 May 2026 (WOAH, 2026). Wild bird cases and poultry outbreaks continue across parts of north-east Europe with south-west Europe now relatively unaffected as described in the main body of this report.

Between 10 April 2026 and 26 May 2026 there were a total of 555 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 WOA, 467 were in wild birds, 13 in non-commercial poultry and 75 were poultry outbreaks. All reports were HPAI H5N1 except for 1 case of HPAI H5Nx in wild birds in Norway, 2 cases of HPAI H5Nx in wild birds in Belgium and 2 cases of HPAI H5N5 in wild birds (kittiwake and raven) from March 2026 in Iceland.

Map 3 shows the HPAI H5 reports from WOA across Europe from 10 April 2026 to 26 May 2026. HPAI H5 continues to clear from the south-west of Europe (noting that the gull case in Spain was detected in March 2026 and is included here for reference). It is interesting to note how HPAI is spreading north-east through the Baltic and into Scandinavia as the migratory wild waterfowl fly back to their breeding grounds away from Great Britain. In particular cases in wild geese (pink-footed and greylag) are spreading along the north coast of Norway (Map 3). Many of the wild bird reports on WOA over this period from 10 April to 26 May are from earlier in the year 2026. Thus of the 467 wild bird cases reported in Europe, 369 were detected in March 2026 or earlier. Only 98 wild bird

cases were detected in April or May 2026 across Europe. Of these detected in April or May, 36 were from Germany, 22 from Austria, 9 from Norway, 4 from Finland, 1 from France, 1 from Estonia, 1 from Czechia, 1 from Greece, 1 from Hungary, 1 from Romania, 4 from Denmark, 7 from Poland, 4 from the Netherlands, 2 from Iceland and 5 from Belgium.

Wild bird species reported in Europe in April and May are still predominantly waterbirds, including 39 geese and 23 swans (of which 22 were mute swans). There were 11 raptors including marsh harrier. There were 3 cases in gulls in Europe between 10 April 2026 and 26 May 2026.

Of the 88 poultry outbreaks reported in Europe on WOAHA between 10 April and 26 May 2026, 81 were detected in April or May. Poultry outbreaks included 71 in Poland, 6 in Germany, 4 in France, 2 in Czechia and Montenegro, and 1 in Denmark, Estonia and the Netherlands.

Implications for Great Britain

The number of wild bird cases has continued to decline since our previous assessment on 10 April 2026 ([HPAI Europe 10 April 2026](#)). Indeed, based on test date, there have been no further wild bird cases in southern England or Wales with a few cases in central and northern England and most cases in Scotland (see Map 2). Since our previous assessment on 10 April 2026 there have been a further 13 wild bird cases collected in April and May that have tested positive to 26 May 2026. Of these 13 wild bird cases, 12 were in Scotland with 1 case in northern England, namely a great black-backed gull case in Northumberland.

Table 1: Numbers (and percentages) of wild bird cases of HPAI H5N1 and H5Nx according to bird group in Great Britain collected from 1 January 2026 to 26 May 2026 These are based on collection date (not test date) to give information on monthly trends in wild bird cases.

Wild Bird Group	January	February	March	April	May
Gull	4 (3.1%)	7 (10.8%)	2 (5.0%)	2 (10.5%)	0
Migrant goose/ducks	11 (8.6%)	9 (13.8%)	10 (25.0%)	6 (31.6%)	0
Migrant swan	1 (0.8%)	0	0	0	0
Owl	3 (2.3%)	1 (1.5%)	0	2 (10.5%)	0
Pigeon	3 (2.3%)	1 (1.5%)	1 (2.5%)	0	0
Raptor	26 (20.3%)	16 (24.6%)	16 (40.0%)	8 (42.1%)	1 (100%)
Resident goose/duck	34 (26.6%)	8 (12.3%)	4 (10.0%)	0	0
Resident swan	46 (35.9%)	16 (24.6%)	2 (5.0%)	1 (5.3%)	0
Seabird	0	7 (10.8%)	5 (12.5%)	0	0
Total	128	65	40	19	1

The species of wild birds affected in Great Britain since 1 January 2026 are collated according to group for each month in Table 1 to show the monthly trends. While resident geese and ducks (mallard ducks, Canada and greylag geese) together with resident (mute) swans accounted for two-thirds of wild bird cases in January 2026, by April 2026 there was just one case in a mute swan in Aberdeen. The 6 migratory geese and duck cases were all pink-footed geese in Scotland. Being migratory, the pink-footed geese have by now (late May) all departed from Great Britain and the cases seen in Scotland in April this year are considered likely to reflect birds flying north towards their breeding grounds in Iceland. Also of note is the continuing high percentage of cases in raptors at 40% in March and 42% in April (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 carcasses. In May there has been only one HPAI H5N1-positive wild bird collected, namely a buzzard in Stirling on the 14 May.

The number of wild bird cases in Europe has also continued to fall week on week (see Figure 3) although the situation in Europe is of little significance to Great Britain at this time of year because migratory ducks, geese and swans have all departed, flying north-east away from Great Britain to their breeding grounds in the Arctic. Since November and December 2025 when monthly wild bird cases peaked at around 250 per month in Great Britain, the total number of cases has halved each month with 128 in January, 65 in February, 40 in March and 19 in April with just 1 so far in May (Table 1). Given the fall in wild bird cases with a few residual remaining cases in raptors in Scotland and the lack of poultry IPs (which are sentinels for circulation of virus in wild birds) since April, the wild bird risk level in Great Britain is reduced from medium to LOW (rare but does occur).

The last few years have seen a coastal process in seabirds over the summer months in Great Britain. There is as yet, no evidence that this will occur this year and the last “BB” gull strain of HPAI H5N1 in Great Britain was identified in January. The small number of seabird cases seen in February and March (Table 1) has not so far led to detectable over-summering in seabirds.

Conclusion

Since our previous assessment on 10 April 2026 ([HPAI Europe 10 April 2026](#)), the number of cases of HPAI H5Nx in wild birds in Great Britain has continued to fall (Figure 2) with just a few cases in raptors in Scotland and only one wild bird case so far in May. Raptors are very sensitive sentinels to the levels of infection in wild birds particularly game birds and waterfowl. Thus while there may be low levels of residual transmission still in wild birds in Great Britain, there have been no cases in resident waterfowl for over a month. This follows a downward trajectory in wild bird cases in Great Britain over the last few months mirrored in wild bird case numbers in Europe (Figure 3). The risk level for wild birds in Great Britain is therefore reduced from medium to LOW (rare but does occur).

The fall in the wild bird risk to low gives greater confidence in the low risk level currently for poultry with suboptimal biosecurity. The uncertainty in the low risk level for poultry with sub-optimal biosecurity is therefore reduced from medium to low. The risk level for poultry with stringent biosecurity is maintained at low also with low uncertainty. It should be noted that the low risk level is broad and that the risk for poultry with stringent biosecurity will be towards the very low end of the low risk range in keeping with the lack of any IPs with stringent biosecurity since December 2025.

The wild bird risk level in Great Britain is now reduced from medium to LOW, 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. The wild bird risk is never reduced below that of low because HPAI H5 can emerge through mutation of low pathogenicity avian influenza H5 virus at any time. It should be stressed that low risk does not mean no risk and residual HPAI H5 may still be circulating at low levels in wild birds in Great Britain. Therefore, the measures in the AIPZ should be seen as good practice.

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 Britain 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 WOA, 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 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 \(woah.org\)](#)



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