Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Updated Outbreak Assessment #9

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

7 August 2026

Disease report

In our previous outbreak assessment on 26 May 2026 the risk level for high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) H5 in wild birds in Great Britain was reduced from medium to LOW (rare but does occur). Since our previous assessment on 26 May 2026, there have been just three further cases of HPAI H5N1 in wild birds in Great Britain. One was a pink-footed goose collected at Inverness at the end of April and is of no further concern because all the migratory ducks and geese departed Great Britain by mid-May. The second was a herring gull in Millwall dock London collected on 20 June. The third was an unidentified gull in Brighton collected on 23 July. Given 881 found-dead wild birds have been collected and sampled since 26 May 2026, we are confident that the wild bird risk level in Great Britain remains at LOW. The total number of wild bird cases in Great Britain since the start of the HPAI season on 1 October 2025 is now 935. Of these 935, 919 have been confirmed as HPAI H5N1,12 as HPAI H5Nx and 4 as HPAI H5N5 (see Map 2 for wild bird cases). It is reassuring to note that there have been no cases in seabirds (gannets, skuas and auks) around Great Britain over the summer as has been observed in recent years. 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.

From a poultry perspective, since our previous outbreak assessment on 26 May 2026, there have been no further confirmed detections of HPAI H5 clade 2.3.4.4b in domestic poultry in Great Britain. The last IP with stringent biosecurity was on 01 December 2025. Given the ongoing low levels of detections in wild birds, together with the high environmental temperatures, the risk level for poultry with stringent biosecurity is reduced from low (with low uncertainty) to VERY LOW (very rare but cannot be excluded) with low uncertainty. Although the last IP with suboptimal biosecurity was more than 3 months ago on 17 April 2026, HPAI H5 may still be circulating in wild birds in south-east England given the recent cases in gulls. The immune status in wild birds is unknown and surveillance is passive based on found-dead wild birds. With that evidence we propose the risk level in Great Britain for HPAI H5 incursion in poultry:

- With non-stringent or suboptimal biosecurity maintained at LOW with low uncertainty; and
- With stringent biosecurity is reduced to VERY LOW with low 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 previous outbreak assessment on 26 May 2026, there have been no new Infected Premises (IP) confirmed with HPAI H5N1 in poultry (to 12 August 2026). The last IP was in mid-April and has since been closed after successful completion of disease control activities and surveillance. 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 March and April 2026 with none since mid-April (see Figure 1).

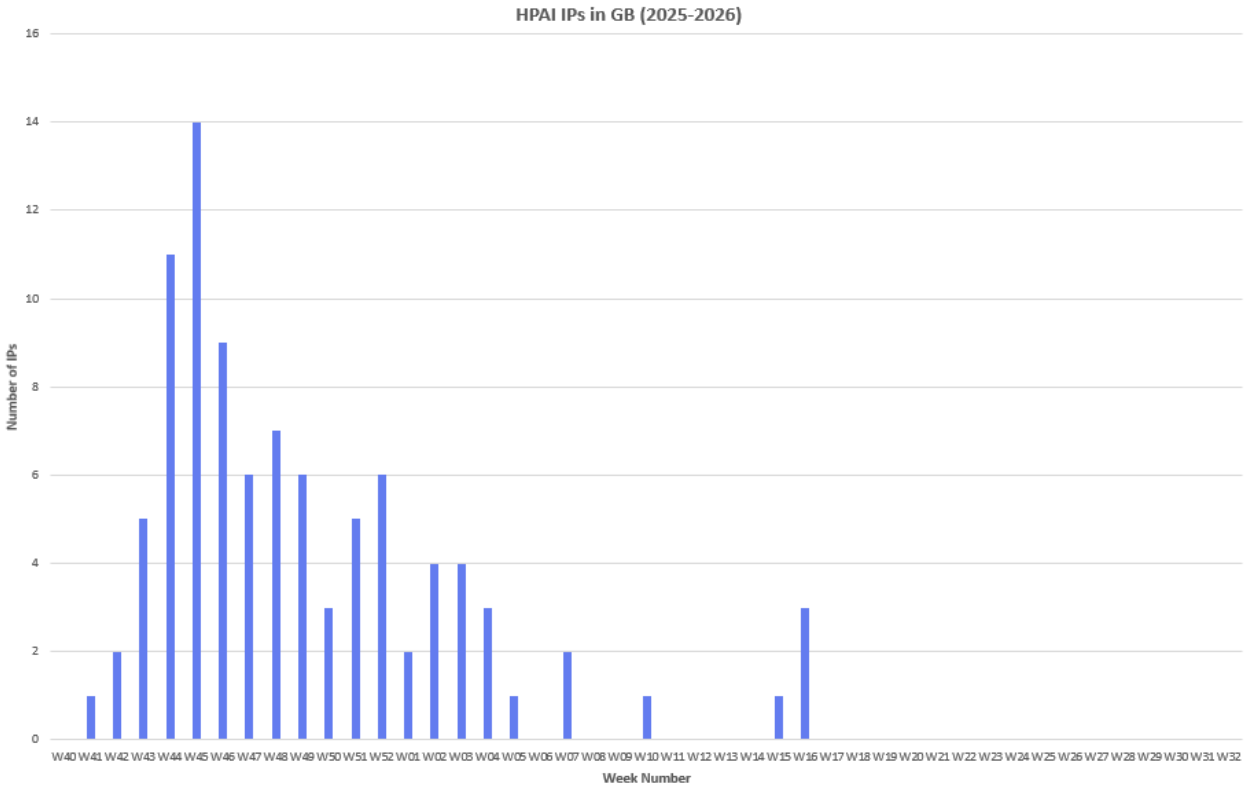
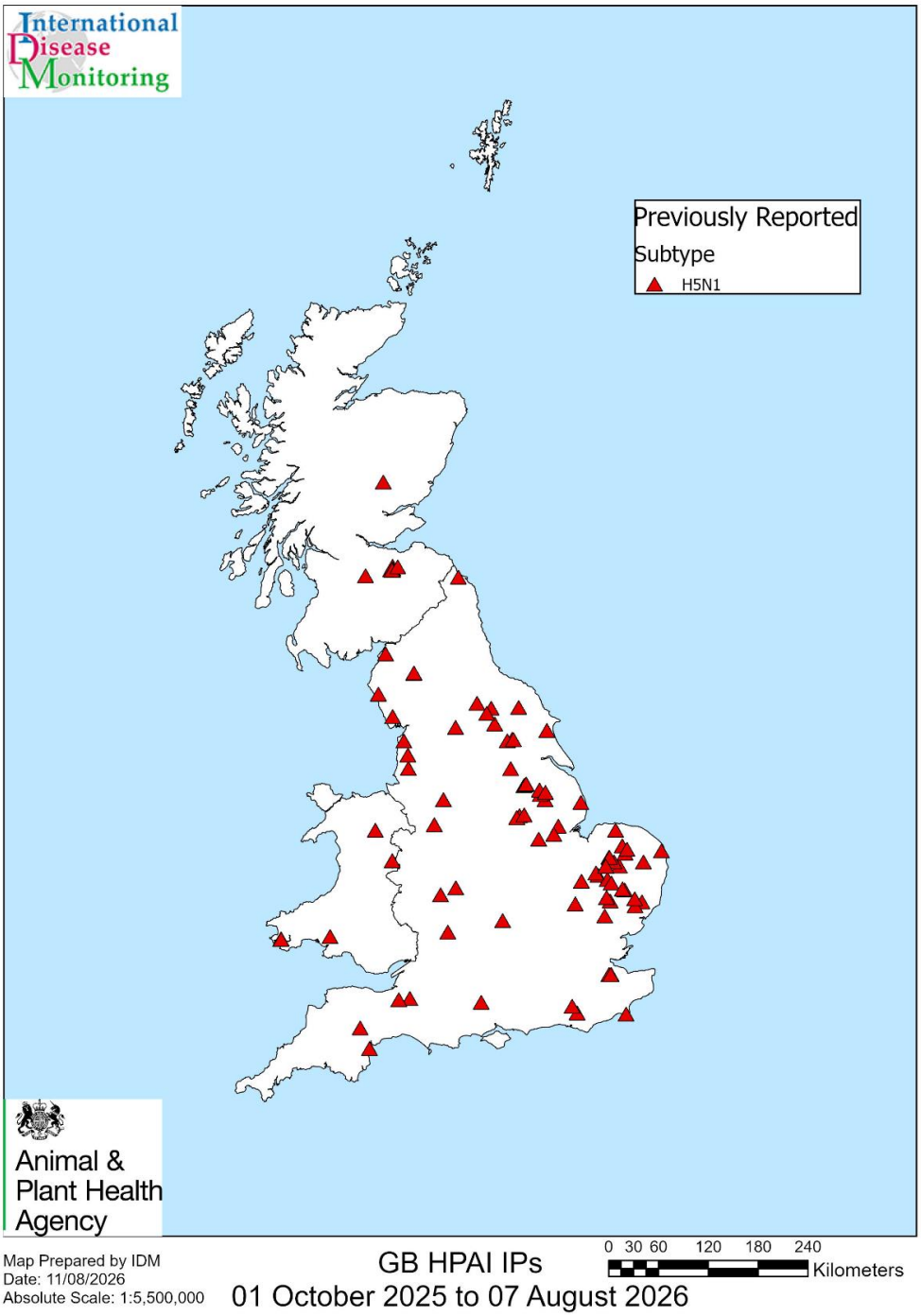


Figure 1: Number of HPAI H5N1-infected premises (IPs) in Great Britain each week from 28 September to 12 August 2026. Graph shows the weekly number of IPs reducing from a peak of 14 per week in early November 2025 to less than 1 per week on average in March and April 2026 and none through May to August 2026. The downward arrow at week 32 displays the week at time of writing.

On 4 June 2026, the avian influenza protection zone (AIPZ) was lifted across Great Britain. All IPs across Great Britain from 01 October 2025 are shown in Map 1.



Map 1. Showing HPAI H5Nx Infected Premises (IPs) across Great Britain from 1 October 2025 to 12 August 2026, as discussed in body of report. There have been no IPs since mid-April 2026.

Wild birds

The weekly number of HPAI H5-positive wild bird cases in Great Britain is shown in Figure 2. Between 26 May 2026 and 12 August 2026 (based on laboratory testing date), HPAI H5 has been detected in 3 found-dead wild birds, including 3 wild bird species (data available https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/avian-influenza-in-wild-birds) across 3 counties. Two of the positive wild bird cases reported since 26 May were collected from coastal locations; one in northeast Scotland in April and the other in southeast England in July. There were no cases in Wales or west England (Map 2). In total, there were 2 wild bird cases in England and 1 in Scotland (based on laboratory testing date).

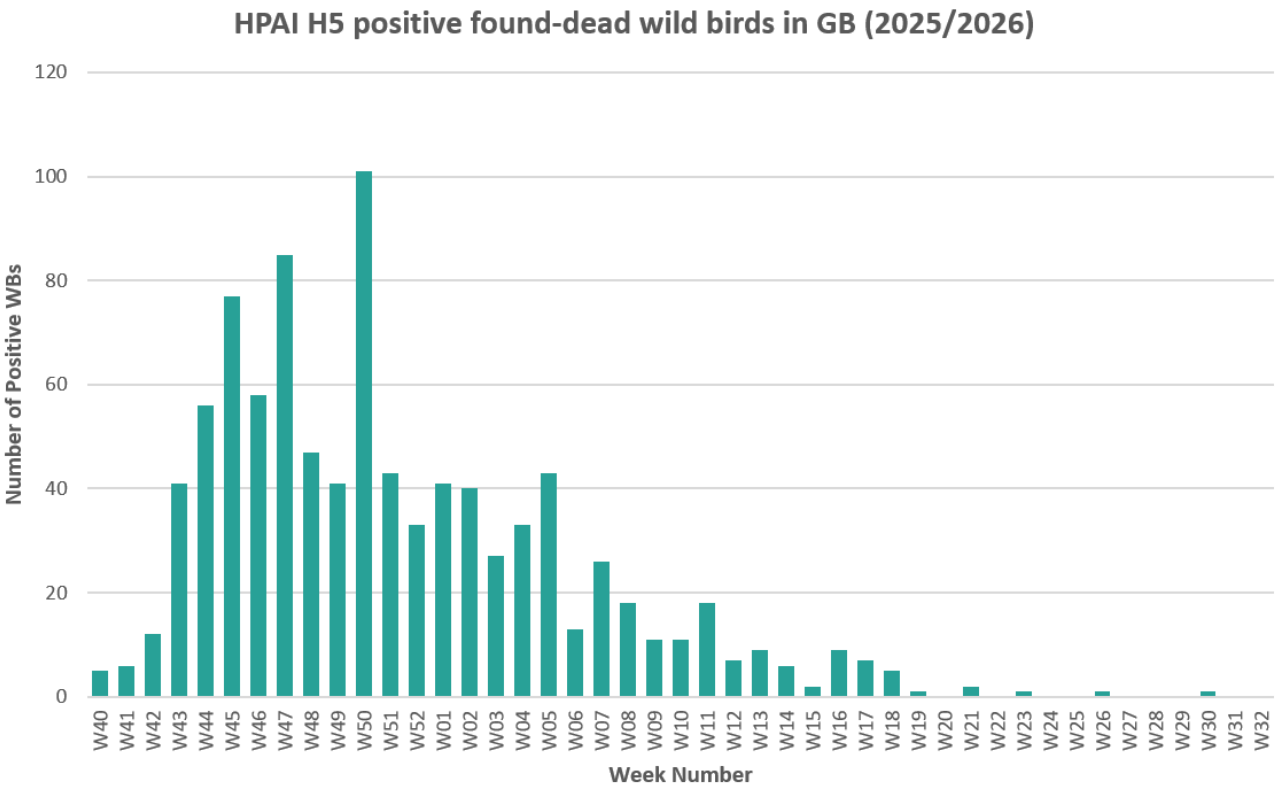
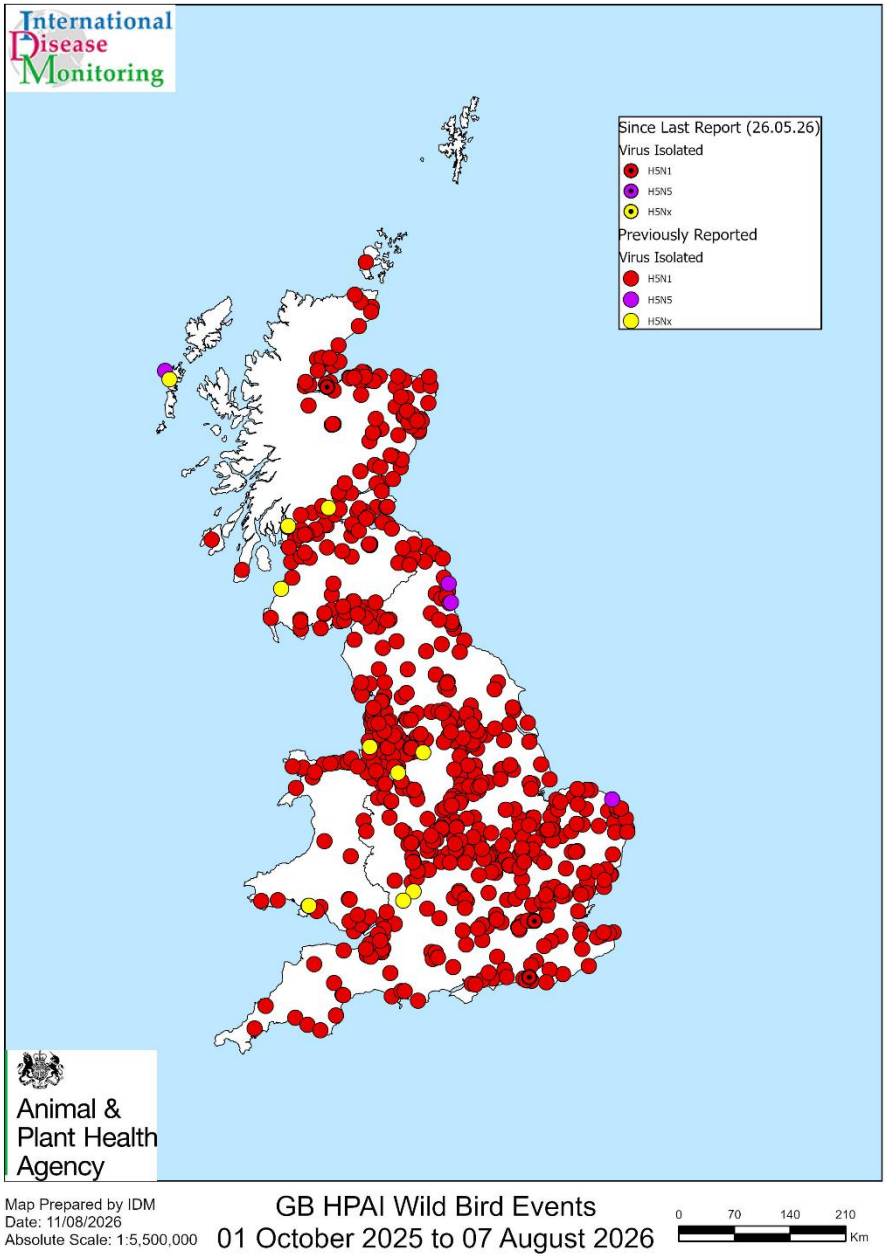


Figure 2: Detections per week of HPAI H5 positive found-dead wild birds in Great Britain since 28 September 2025 to 7 August 2026 (based on test date). The graph shows a steady decline in the number of detections per week from mid-December 2025 to early May 2026 with only sporadic cases into August 2026.

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 also 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 01 October 2025 to 07 August 2026 (based on laboratory testing date). The symbols with black dots are the wild bird cases since our last report (26 May 2026).

Non-avian wildlife

Since 26 May 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) has remained at around 20 reports per week from mid-May and through June falling to around 10 per week in July (Figure 3). This represents a marked reduction since the peaks of almost 320 cases per week in February.

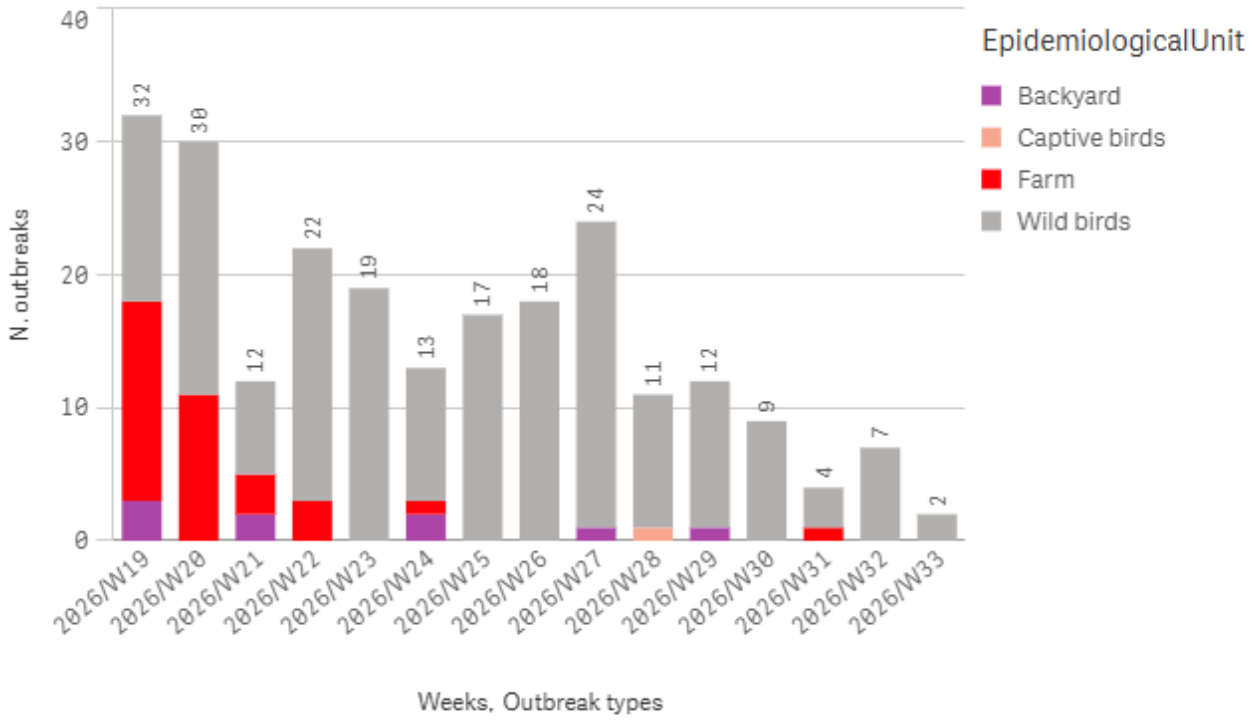
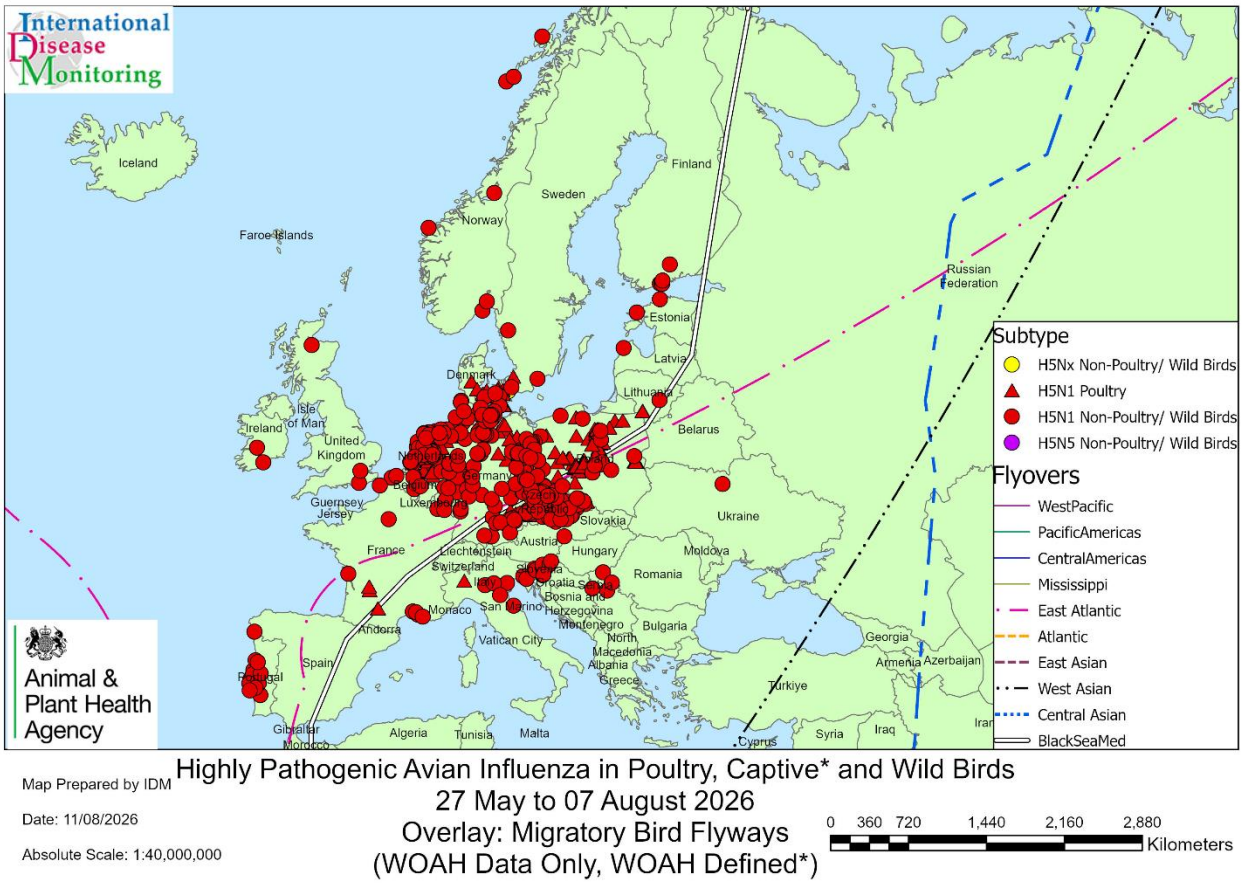


Figure 3: Weekly numbers of HPAI H5 positive reports in Europe according to data from IZSVe (2026) from early May 2026 to early August 2026. The figure shows levels at around 20 positive reports per week through May and June before decreasing to around 10 reports per week by early July. Wild bird cases in grey predominate over poultry outbreaks in red and purple as discussed in the text. It should be noted there may be more reports to follow for weeks 32 and 33.

The number of wild bird cases in Europe being reported on ADIS (2026) has also fallen with 1 HPAI H5N1 wild bird case reported in Germany, 3 wild bird cases in Norway and 1 poultry outbreak in Germany in the week to 29 July 2026. In the week to 5 August 2026 there were 10 cases of HPAI H5N1 in wild birds in the Netherlands and 1 in Finland.



Map 3. HPAI events in domestic poultry and wild birds in Europe reported to WOAH between 26 May 2026 and 07 August 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. Two-thirds of the events in the map were detected prior to June 2026.

Between 26 May 2026 and 05 August 2026 there were a total of 226 HPAI H5 events in domestic poultry, captive birds and non-poultry including wild birds across Europe reported to the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH). Of these reports on WOAH, 216 were in wild birds, 5 in non-commercial poultry and 5 were commercial poultry outbreaks. All reports were HPAI H5N1 except for 1 case of HPAI H5Nx in wild birds (gull) in Denmark and 2 cases of HPAI HxNx in wild birds (geese) in Finland.

Map 3 shows the HPAI H5 reports from WOAH across Europe from 26 May 2026 and 07 August 2026. HPAI H5 has cleared from the southern Europe with the exception of 3 cases in gulls along the Atlantic coast of the Iberian Peninsula in May and June. HPAI has continued to spread north-east through the Baltic and into Scandinavia with 8 cases in Norway in May to July and 6 cases in Finland in April to July due to migratory wild waterfowl flyling back to their breeding grounds. 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 WOAH over this period from 26 May to 05 July are from earlier in the year 2026. Thus of the 216 wild bird cases reported in Europe, 143 (i.e. two-thirds) were detected in May 2026 or earlier. Only 63 wild bird cases were detected in June and July

2026 across Europe. Of those detected in June and July, 35 were from Germany and 25 were from the Netherlands with 3 in Belgium and 1 in Poland. The 5 cases in France were from January to March.

Wild bird species reported in Europe in June and July are still predominantly waterbirds, including 40 greylag geese, 2 pink-footed geese and 16 swans (of which 14 were identified as mute swans). There were relatively few raptors in June and July in Europe. There were 5 cases detected in gulls in Europe between 26 May 2026 and 5 August 2026.

Of the 5 commercial poultry outbreaks reported in Europe on WOAH between 26 May 2026 and 05 August 2026, 3 were detected in May. Poultry outbreaks included 2 in Poland, 1 in Germany, 1 in France and 1 in Sweden.

Implications for Great Britain

There have been just 3 wild bird cases in Great Britain since our previous assessment on 26 May 2026. The two gull cases in June and July were of more interest (than the migratory goose from April) because of the cases in wild birds including gull species and other waterbirds across the English Channel in Belgium and in the Netherlands earlier in the summer. The last few years have seen a coastal process in seabirds over the summer months in Great Britain. However, this summer, cases in gulls and seabirds both in Great Britain and Europe have been rare and sporadic. Cases in wild birds in Europe have remained at around 20 per week for most of the summer according to IZSVe data but have fallen to around 10 per week in late July/early August. The genotypes of the two gull cases in Great Britain are both BB but with a different PA gene segment (most likely from an undetected low pathogenicity avian influenza virus closest to a Dutch virus). It is worth noting that both cases in gulls could be interpreted as literal spill-over of ongoing processes across coastal northern Europe (e.g. Netherland) and may not represent any signal of an ongoing process in the UK. Non-breeding Herring gulls are known to range across substantial areas in summer and both the tidal and estuarine Thames and Brighton might be considered potentially connected to coastal Europe for such a wide-ranging species.

Since there is always a low risk of spontaneous mutation of low pathogenicity avian influenza H5 into HPAI H5, the risk level for wild birds remains at LOW. Large numbers of found-dead wild birds (87 in week to 16 July and 98 in week to 23 July) have been tested and were negative for AIV increasing our confidence in the low wild bird risk level and the high temperatures with the heat waves through July and into August will be reducing environmental persistence of the virus, although drying of inland lakes may concentrate wild birds at remaining water sources. Migratory waterbirds from northern and western Europe will start to arrive from mid-September.

Conclusion

Since our previous outbreak assessment on 26 May 2026, the number of cases of HPAI H5Nx in wild birds in Great Britain has fallen considerably (Figure 2) with just two cases in gulls in south-eastern England and a case in a goose from April (Map 2). There have not even been any more cases in raptors which are very sensitive sentinels to the levels of infection in wild birds particularly game birds and waterfowl. The risk level for wild birds in Great Britain is therefore maintained at LOW (rare but does occur).

The very small number of wild bird cases fully supports the LOW risk level currently for poultry with suboptimal biosecurity. In should be noted that the low risk level band is broad and the risk level for wild birds is at the higher end of the low risk level band while that for poultry with sub-optimal biosecurity is considered to be towards to the lower end of the low risk level band although not low enough to be very low. Given the low wild bird risk level and the very few cases recently in wild birds, it is considered that the risk level for poultry with stringent biosecurity is now at VERY LOW (very rare but cannot be excluded) with low uncertainty in keeping with the lack of any IPs with stringent biosecurity since December 2025.

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 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.

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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.