Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Updated Outbreak Assessment #11

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

6 November 2026

Disease report

In our previous outbreak assessment on 30 September 2026, the wild bird risk level for high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) H5 in Great Britain was increased from low to MEDIUM. Although no positive detections had been reported, this was in anticipation of the arrival of migratory waterbirds which had flown through areas of northern Europe where HPAI H5N1 has been detected in greylag and pink-footed geese. Since then, 16 cases of HPAI H5N1 have been detected in a range of wild bird species across much of England. In addition, HPAI H5N5 has been detected in wild birds (1), poultry (1) and mammals (3) in Scotland with cases in gulls (3) in northern England. These detections of HPAI H5N1 and H5N5 in Great Britain together with the notable increase in wild bird cases reported across Europe in October, and the ongoing migration of wild birds into Great Britain from Europe, provide strong evidence that the wild bird risk is increasing in Great Britain. The risk level for wild birds in Great Britain is therefore increased from medium to HIGH (occurs very often). Implementing and maintaining biosecurity measures to prevent exposure of poultry and other kept birds to the infectious agent are of heightened importance.

From a poultry perspective, since our previous outbreak assessment on 30 September 2026, there have been 4 confirmed detections of HPAI H5 clade 2.3.4.4b in domestic poultry in Great Britain. These include 3 detections of HPAI H5N1 in poultry in England and Scotland and 1 detection of HPAI H5N5 in backyard poultry in Scotland.

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

- With non-stringent or suboptimal biosecurity is increased from low to MEDIUM (occurs regularly) with medium uncertainty; and
- With stringent biosecurity is increased from very low to LOW (rare but does occur) 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

The 2026 to 2027 season for HPAI started on 1 October 2026. Since our previous outbreak assessment on 30 September 2026, there have been 4 new Infected Premises (IP) confirmed with HPAI H5 in poultry (to 6 November 2026). The number of IPs per week since 1 October 2026 is shown in Figure 1.

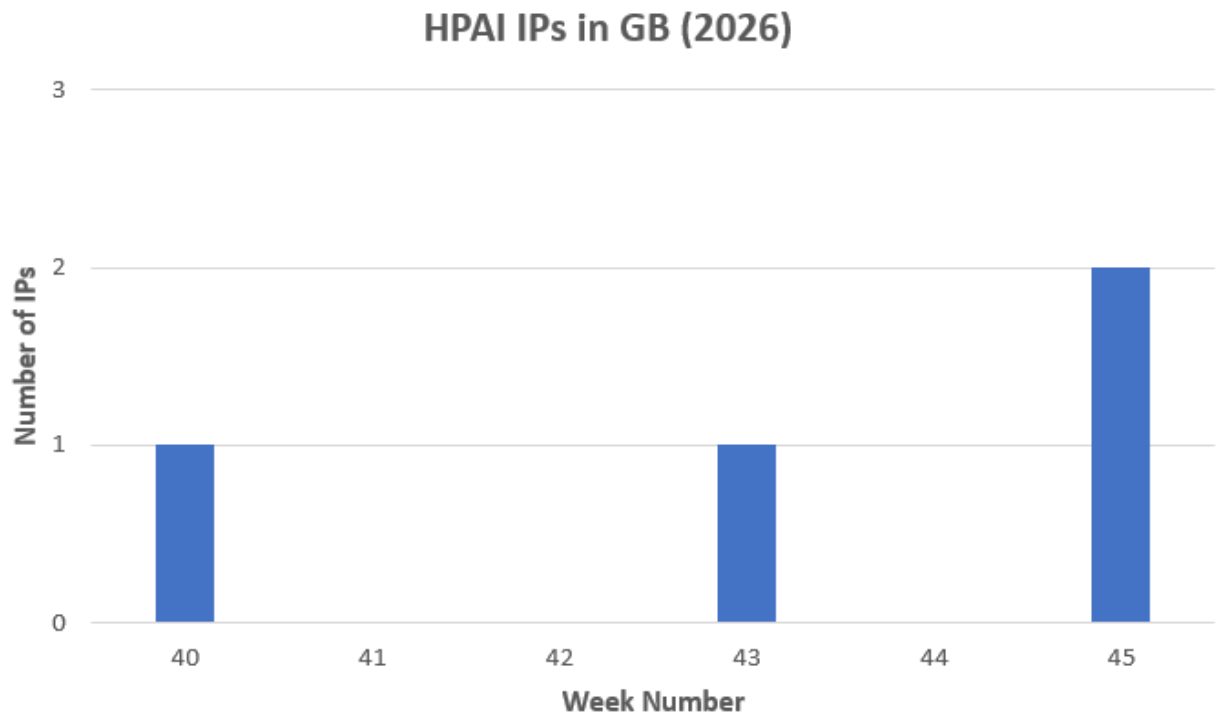
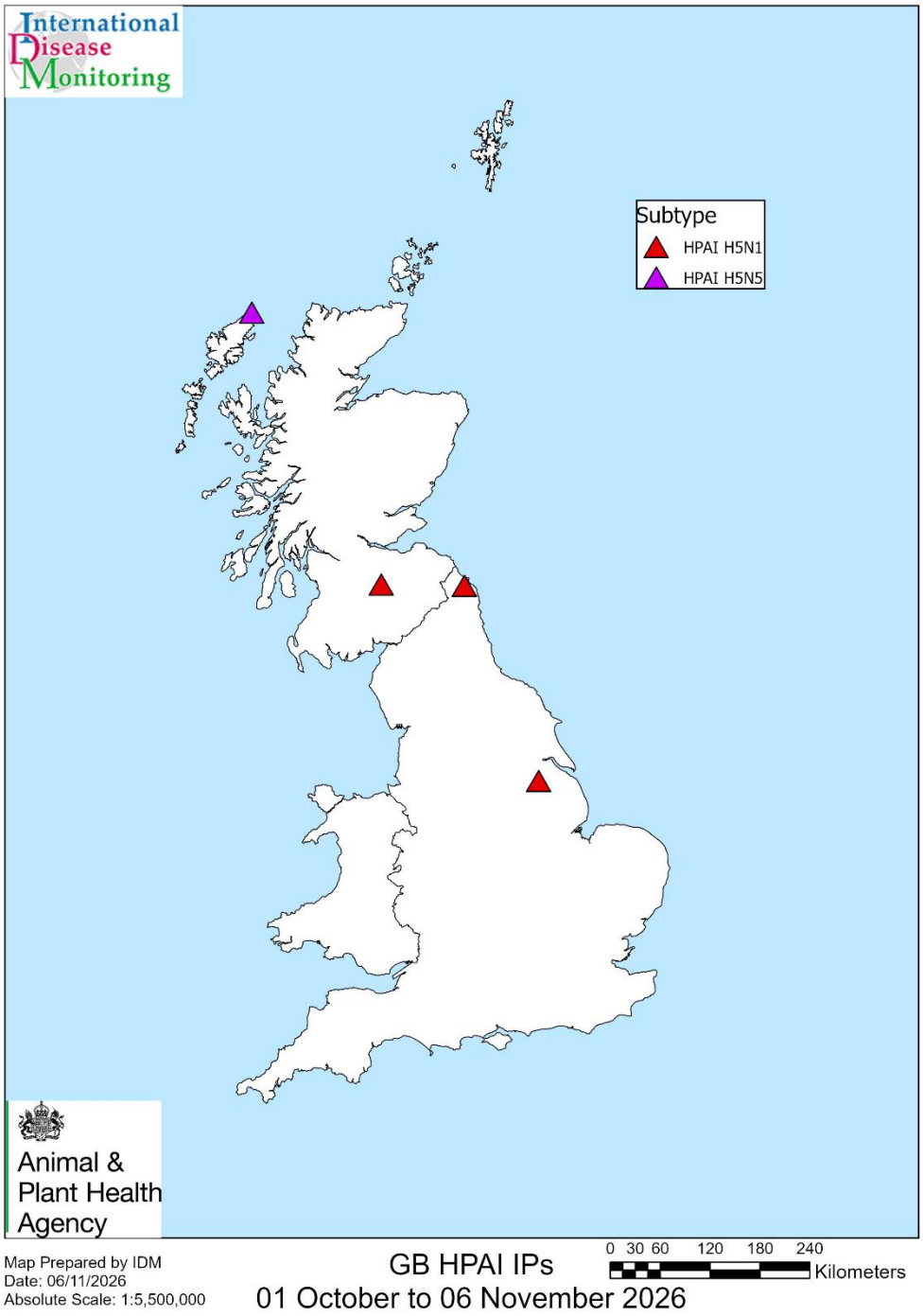


Figure 1: Number of HPAI H5N1-infected premises (IPs) in Great Britain each week from 1 October 2026 to 6 November 2026. Graph shows the weekly number of IPs beginning to increase through October.

The 4 IPs across Great Britain from 01 October 2026 are shown in Map 1.



Map 1. Showing HPAI H5Nx Infected Premises (IPs) across Great Britain from 1 October 2026 to 6 November 2026. As discussed in the body of report, there have been 4 IPs in October 2026.

The first IP of the season detected was HPAI H5N5 in a backyard poultry flock on the Isle of Lewis in early October. The second IP was detection of HPAI H5N1 in free range poultry in Northumberland in mid-October. The third and fourth IPs were detected in early November and were HPAI H5N1 in free-range hens in Lanarkshire and in housed ducks in Lincolnshire.

Wild birds

The weekly number of HPAI H5-positive wild bird cases in Great Britain is shown in Figure 2. Between 1 October 2026 and 6 November 2026 (based on laboratory testing date), HPAI H5 has been detected in 20 found-dead wild birds, including 13 wild bird species (data available https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/avian-influenza-in-wild-birds) across 14 counties. There were no cases in south-west England or Wales (Map 2). In total, there were 18 wild bird cases in England, 0 in Wales and 2 in Scotland. Of these 20 wild bird cases, 16 were H5N1 and 4 were H5N5.

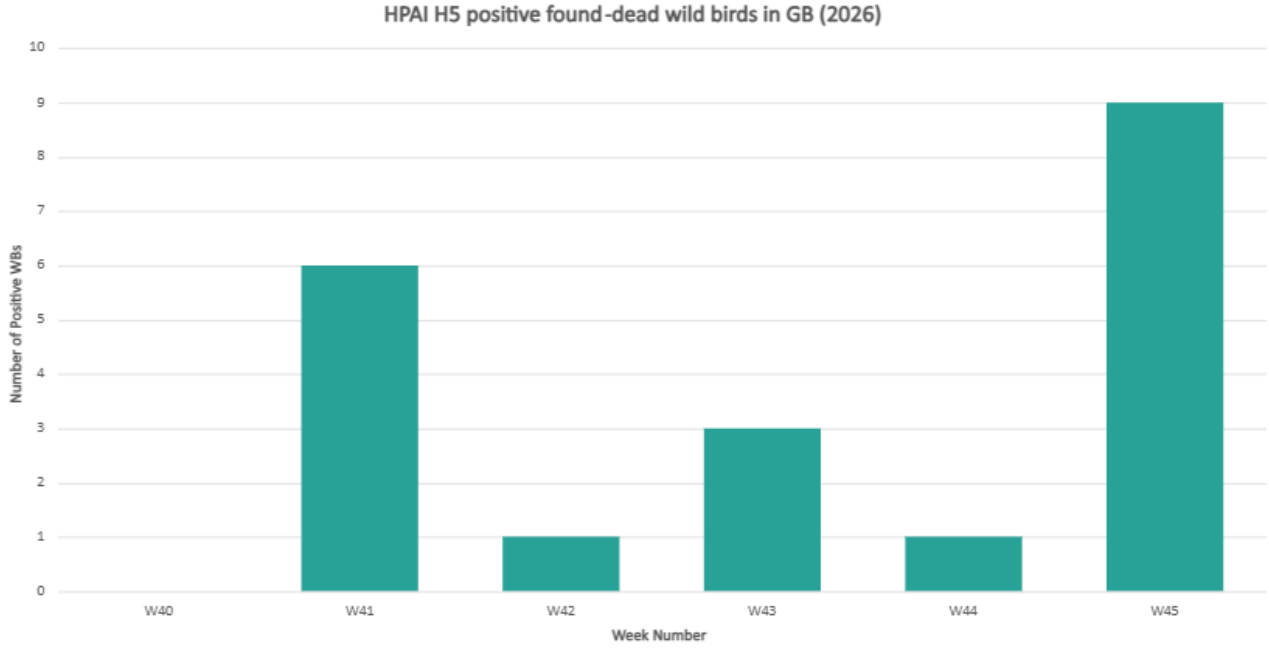
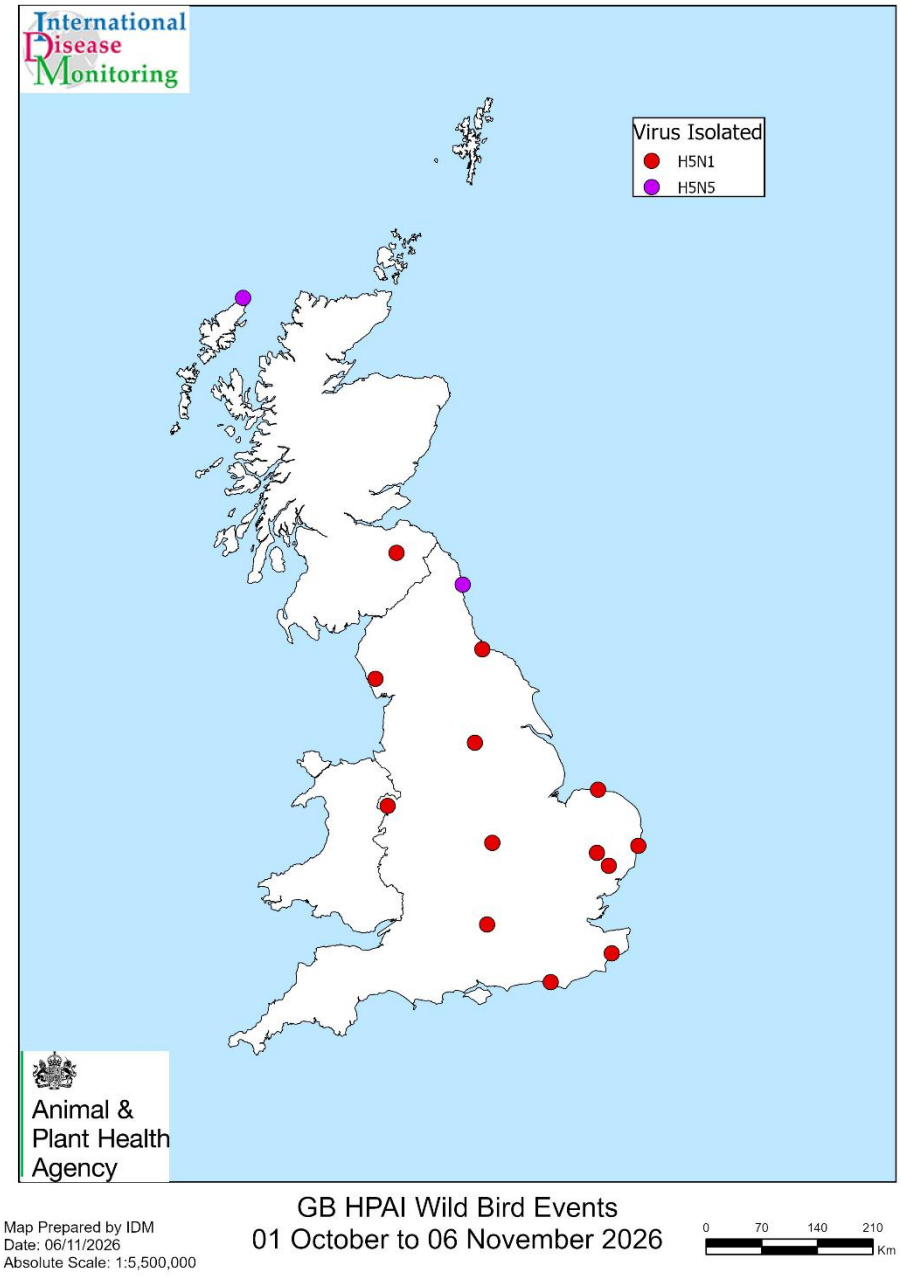


Figure 2: Detections per week of HPAI H5 positive found-dead wild birds in Great Britain since 1 October 2025 to 6 November 2026 (based on test date). The graph shows an increase in early November 2026 with 6 cases of H5N1 and 3 cases of H5N5 (see text).

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 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 reported across Great Britain from 01 October 2026 to 06 November 2026 (based on laboratory testing date). Wild bird H5N1 cases have been detected across most of eastern and northern England.

Non-avian wildlife

Since 7 August 2026, there have been 3 positive HPAI H5 detections in non-avian wildlife in Great Britain. These include 2 otters with HPAI H5N5 in Scotland and a third otter with HPAI H5Nx in Scotland. 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) fell to very low numbers at around 5 per week in September. However, through early October the numbers have doubled to around 10 per week and then doubled again to over 20 per week in late October (Figure 3). The increase is predominantly due to wild bird cases.

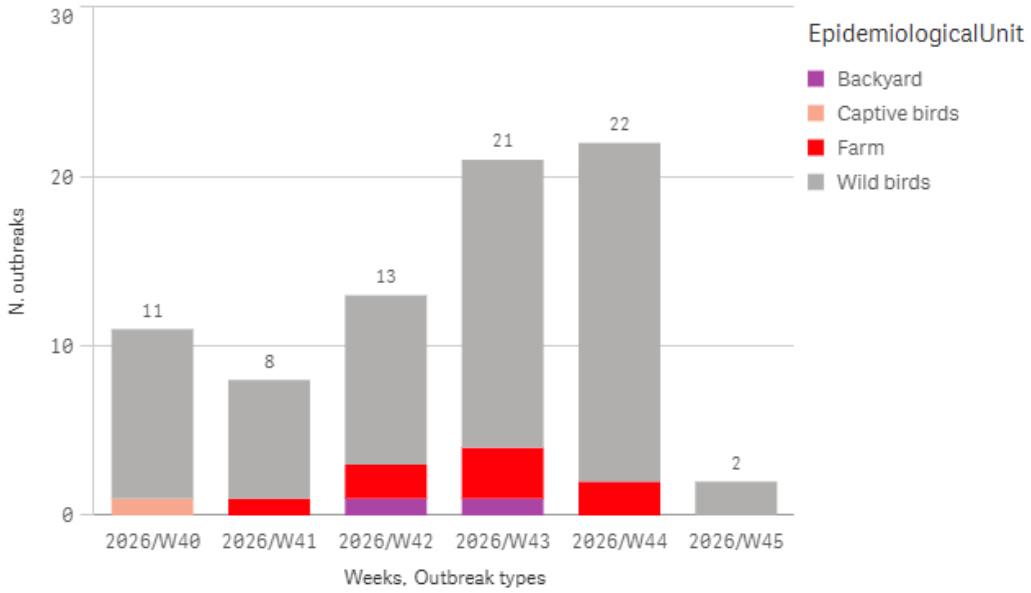
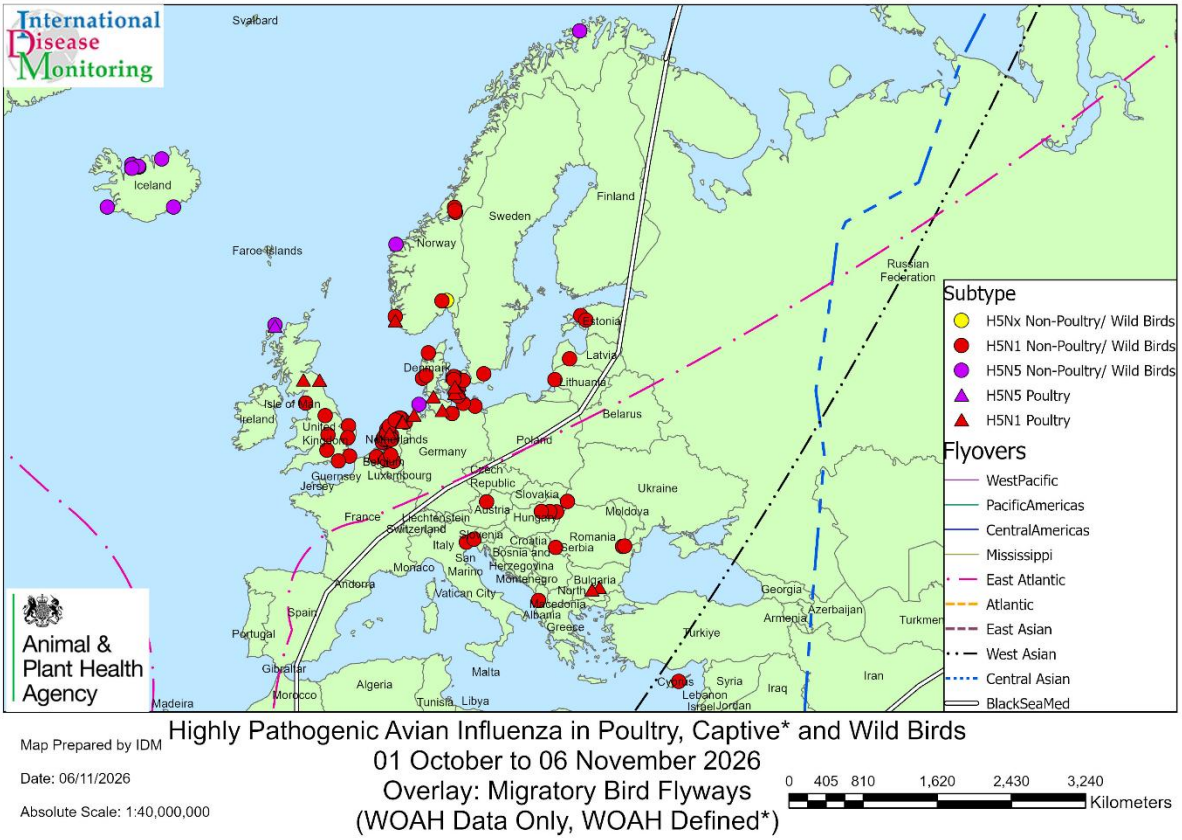


Figure 3: Weekly numbers of HPAI H5 positive reports in Europe according to data from IZSVe (2026) from early October 2026 to early November 2026. The figure shows levels increasing from 10 per week in early October to over 20 per week in late October. Wild bird cases in grey predominate over poultry outbreaks in red and purple as discussed in the text. It should be noted there may be more reports to follow for week 45.



Map 3. HPAI events in domestic poultry and wild birds in Europe reported to WOAH between 1 October 2026 and 6 November 2026 (WOAH, 2026). Positive reports show 3 main disease processes namely H5N5 in northern Europe, H5N1 in the Baltic and Wadden Sea and H5N1 spreading west in southern Europe as described in the main body of this report.

Between 1 October 2026 and 2 November 2026 there were a total of 81 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, 69 were in wild birds, 2 were in non-commercial poultry and 10 were commercial poultry outbreaks. All poultry outbreaks were H5N1. However, of the 69 wild bird cases, 10 were H5N5 and 3 were H5Nx, the other 56 being H5N1. The H5N5 cases were in Iceland (8), Germany (1) and Norway (2). 52 of the 69 wild bird HPAI H5 cases were detected in October, up from 16 in September (with 1 H5N1 case from July in Germany).

The 12 poultry outbreaks included Albania (1), Bulgaria (2), Denmark (3), Germany (3) and the Netherlands (3). All were in October except for 1 from Germany in May. On ADIS in the week to 4 November (ADIS 2026) there were 13 wild bird cases of HPAI H5N1 in the Netherlands and 11 in Denmark. These detections are much higher than reported in other European countries with 4 wild bird cases of H5N1 in Austria, 1 in Belgium, 4 in Germany, 1 in Estonia, 4 in Hungary, 5 in Italy, and 1 in Norway reported on ADIS in the week to 4 November 2026. Also on ADIS in that week was 1 poultry outbreak of H5N1 in Germany and 1 in Norway. There was 1 case of HPAI H5N5 in wild birds in Norway on ADIS in the week to 4 November 2026 (ADIS 2026).

Map 3 shows the HPAI H5 reports from WOAH across Europe from 1 October 2026 to 6 November 2026. From Map 3, 3 distinct disease processes are apparent. The first is HPAI H5N5 in northern Europe including gulls and skuas in Iceland, gulls in Norway and a gull in the Wadden Sea area in north Germany. The second is HPAI H5N1 in northern Europe including wild birds in the Baltic States, northern Germany, Denmark, southern Norway and Sweden, the Netherlands and Belgium. The third is the spread of HPAI H5N1 west in southern Europe with reports in Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Albania and west into north-east Italy. Of the 69 wild bird cases, 23 were in migratory duck species. These include 2 Northern pintail (Denmark), 2 teal (Latvia and Netherlands) and 19 wigeon (Belgium 1, Denmark 4, Italy 3, Latvia 3, Netherlands 8). Other wild bird species include mallard (4), greylag goose (6), pink-footed goose (3), gull species (11) with some raptors and owls. There was also a jay in Denmark.

In the Netherlands, on the basis of 3 poultry outbreaks, a national housing order has been imposed (National obligation to keep poultry indoors and shield imposed after bird flu outbreaks | NVWA). In Denmark, the risk of introduction of HPAI into poultry flocks through contact with wild birds has been increased from medium to high (Threat assessment for HPAI as of 04-11-2026 from wild birds - Veterinary and Food Administration). Hunting of birds is now banned in 7 municipalities in Rogaland in Norway due to HPAI in commercial poultry and wild birds (Bird flu | Norwegian Food Safety Authority). The risk level in France has been raised from negligible to moderate.

Implications for Great Britain

Since our previous outbreak assessment on 30 September 2026 there have been 16 cases of HPAI H5N1 in wild birds in England and Scotland with 6 of those H5N1 cases reported in the first week of November (Figure 2). In addition there has been 1 wild bird case with H5N5 in Scotland and 3 wild bird cases of H5N5 in northern England together with 3 cases in otters in Scotland. The range of species infected with HPAI H5N1 is interesting and notably included only 3 waterfowl species namely 1 whooper swan in Lancashire, 1 Canada goose in Suffolk and 1 unidentified duck in Norfolk. Unusually there were 2 cases in pigeons and 1 case in a greenfinch. Birds of prey included 2 red kites and 2 sparrowhawks, suggesting a more widespread disease process. Other waterbirds include 1 case in a herring gull and 1 curlew. There was also 1 barn owl and 3 pheasants. The 4 poultry IPs also indicate an ongoing and increasing disease process in wild birds. The wild bird case in Scotland with H5N5 was a corvid which had presumably scavenged an infected waterbird arriving from Iceland where H5N5 has been spreading in gulls and skuas this autumn (Map 3). There were 3 cases of H5N5 in great black-backed gulls in Northumberland. These are typically marine gulls. Notably, there has been a clear increase in the numbers and species of wild birds infected across England and Scotland with many at inland locations. In addition, the number of cases of HPAI H5N1 in wild birds in northern Europe is increasing markedly (Figure 3) with a notable shift in species to migratory ducks such as wigeon and pintail, some of which may migrate into Great Britain

in the coming days and weeks. The risk level for wild birds in Great Britain is therefore increased from medium to HIGH (occurs very often).

Given the reports of HPAI H5N5 in gulls and skuas in September in Iceland (Map 3) through which many geese would fly on their migration to Scotland, the outbreak of HPAI H5N5 on the Isle of Lewis was not unexpected. Similarly, the 3 outbreaks of HPAI H5N1 in northern England and southern Scotland were anticipated on the basis of increasing wild bird cases of H5N1 in northern Europe (Map 3) and the ongoing migration of waterfowl into Great Britain. The notable increase in wild bird risk naturally increases the infection pressure on poultry. The 4 IPs so far detected represent the sub-optimal biosecurity category. The risk level for poultry with sub-optimal biosecurity is therefore increased from low to MEDIUM (occurs regularly) with medium uncertainty. Although there have not been any IPs with stringent biosecurity so far, it is considered that the risk level for poultry in Great Britain with stringent biosecurity should be increased from very low to LOW (rare but does occur) with low uncertainty given the overall increase in infection pressure.

Conclusion

Since our previous outbreak assessment on 30 September 2026, the number of cases of HPAI H5Nx in wild birds in Great Britain has increased (Figure 2) with detections across much of southern and eastern England and Scotland (Map 2). Taking in account the ongoing migration rate of waterbirds into Great Britain through areas in Europe where HPAI H5 is still being detected in wild waterbirds, including now many migratory ducks, it is considered that the risk level for wild birds in Great Britain has increased from medium to HIGH (occurs very often).

An increase in the wild bird risk, particularly in resident waterbirds, is associated with an increase in the risk to poultry particularly where biosecurity is sub-optimal. Therefore, the risk level currently for poultry with suboptimal biosecurity is increased from low to MEDIUM (occurs regularly) with medium uncertainty. The risk level for poultry with stringent biosecurity is increased from very low to LOW (rare but does occur) with low uncertainty.

The measures in an Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ) should be seen as good practice. It is important that stringent adherence to good biosecurity practices is maintained.

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.

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 APHA 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)

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