

## Updated Outbreak Assessment #16

# Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza H5N8 in the UK and Europe

22<sup>nd</sup> October 2017

Ref: VITT/1200 Avian Influenza in Europe

### Disease report

Since our last update on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2017, in Europe, reports of H5N8 HPAI have continued in a number of countries. Italy has reported seventeen more outbreaks of H5N8 HPAI in Bergamo, Brescia, Ferrara, Sondrio, Vicenza and Cremona. The poultry involved included fattening turkeys and layers and seven smallholdings. In all cases, disease control measures are in place; most introductions are considered to be primary incursions with little secondary spread observed. One of the outbreaks was reported in one of the largest layer farms in Italy, with over 850,000 birds to be destroyed. Wild birds positive for H5N8 HPAI have been reported in 3 cases (mute swans, *Cygnus olor*, one in Como and two cases in Verbano). More information on the individual infected premises can be found at the website of the Italian regional laboratory (IZSV, 2017)



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Outbreaks of H5N8 HPAI in poultry, captive and wild birds  
August-October 2017

Actual Scale 1:7,000,000

Map prepared by IDM

0 65 130 260 390 520 Km

Germany has reported a finding in a wild duck (species unknown) near the border with the Netherlands. They have also reported that a virus from a mute swan sampled in September is different from others previously found in that region but shows high similarities to others across Europe (Friedrich Loeffler Institute, 2017). New incursions to Europe as a whole remain a continuous risk and the increase in detections in recent days and weeks of H5N8 support local maintenance of virus and increase in risk as new waterfowl populations move and arrive within Europe.

Bulgaria has reported two outbreaks of H5N8 HPAI in poultry – one in a commercial duck unit of ~10,000 birds and the other on a backyard farm.

## Situation assessment

In the UK, the wild bird migration season is well under way which will bring birds from their breeding grounds in Central and North Eurasia to Europe and the UK for wintering. The findings of new incursions in wild birds in Central Europe mirrors what was occurring last year although there is a lot of uncertainty around whether we see a similar situation to that of last year.

Elsewhere, the H5N8 HPAI virus also continues to be reported in South Africa, where it is present in several regions and several poultry types. Notably, several commercial ostrich farms and hen layer farms in Western Cape Province. Nearly 2/3 of the layers present in Western Cape have now been culled as a result (2.6 million birds) although the infected birds on the ostrich farms have not been culled according to the OIE reports.

The EFSA scientific opinion on Avian Influenza and the EFSA report on the H5N8 HPAI epizootic of 2016-2017 are now published:

Link to the scientific opinion:

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.2903/j.efsa.2017.4991/full>

Link to the scientific report:

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.2903/j.efsa.2017.5018/full>

## Conclusion

Given the recent findings in wild birds in Germany and the likely migration routes to the UK, the risk level for the UK for an incursion in wild birds has been raised to “**MEDIUM**”. The risk for poultry remains “**LOW**” for introduction of infection onto individual premises, but will depend on levels of biosecurity which we recommend should be increased, particularly for seasonal fattening farms of poultry.

We strongly recommend that all poultry keepers (including backyard keepers) review their biosecurity measures and business continuity plans now, as the risk level may well increase in the coming weeks. They should familiarise themselves with government guidance on good biosecurity and how to report suspicion of disease appropriately.

Further information is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/avian-influenza-bird-flu> including updated biosecurity advice for poultry keepers for England; <http://gov.wales/topics/environmentcountryside/ahw/poultry/bird-gatherings-advice/?lang=en> for Wales and; <http://gov.scot/avianinfluenza> for Scotland

We ask that the public use the **Defra helpline (Tel: 03459 33 55 77)** to report findings of dead wild birds. In particular, any wild ducks, wild geese, swans, gulls or birds of prey and where more than five birds of any other species are found dead in the same location.

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## References

Friedrich Loeffler Institute (2017) Radar bulletin September 2017.

[https://www.openagrar.de/servlets/MCRFileNodeServlet/openagrar\\_derivate\\_00005371/Radar\\_Bulletin\\_Deutschland-September\\_2017\\_oeffentlich.pdf](https://www.openagrar.de/servlets/MCRFileNodeServlet/openagrar_derivate_00005371/Radar_Bulletin_Deutschland-September_2017_oeffentlich.pdf)

IZSV (2017) Avian Influenza in Italy: updates. <http://www.izsvenezie.com/avian-influenza-italy-updates/>



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