

Update on Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in Europe

13th December 2017

Since our last update on 27th of October 2017 reports of HPAI in Europe have continued to occur at a low level relative to this time last year. A summary of these outbreaks is as follows:

Italy:

Italy has had 27 more outbreaks of H5N8 HPAI in November, most of which occurred in northern Italy and two of which involved wild birds.

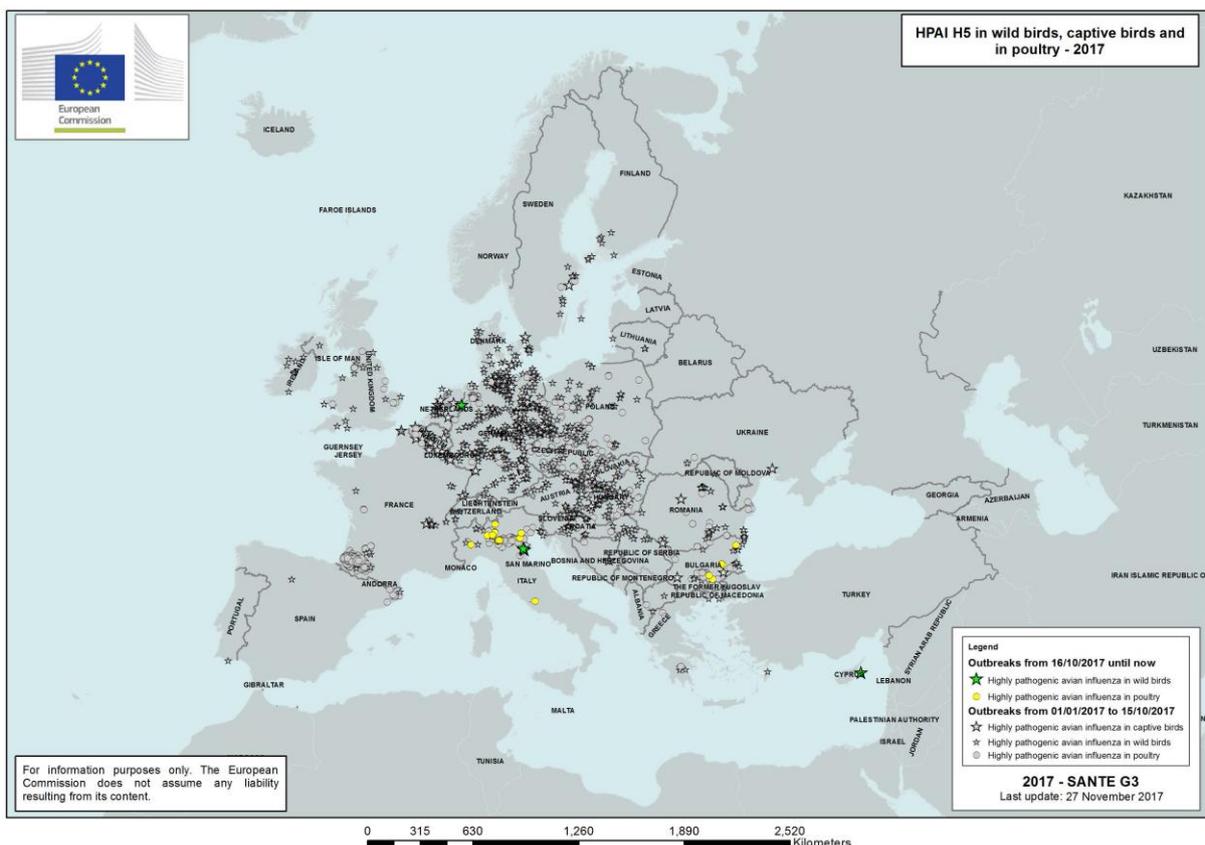
Bulgaria:

Bulgaria has had 3 more outbreaks of H5N8 HPAI in commercial duck flocks in November. These are in addition to the 2 outbreaks reported in October in a duck farm and a backyard hen/turkey flock.

Russia:

Russia reported an outbreak of H5N8 HPAI in Rostov (just east of the Ukraine) in mid-November.

Figure 1: Map of HPAI H5 in Europe to 27/11/2017 (green and yellow markers show events/outbreaks from 16/10/2017 to 27/11/2017) (source European Commission)



Netherlands

On the 8th December, Netherlands reported an outbreak of H5 HPAI in ducks in Flevoland. The virus was confirmed as HPAI H5N6. The holding in question had sixteen thousand ducks in place all of which have been culled. In addition control measures including cleansing and disinfection and establishment of 3km and 10 km restriction zones have been implemented. Surveillance on other premises within the zones has been carried out and all results were negative.

Following this outbreak the Dutch Authorities have introduced a requirement **for all commercial poultry owners to house poultry**, and for owners of hobby / captive birds to implement measures to prevent contact with wild birds. Also additional biosecurity measures for transport (including a ban in the 10km zone for movement of poultry products, manure or live birds) have been introduced as well as a ban on the shows and exhibitions of ornamental poultry and waterfowl.

This outbreak of H5N6 HPAI is likely to be a new incursion to Europe of H5N6 as this subtype had not been reported since February 2017 (a single poultry outbreak in Greece). Further definitive analyses of the virus is being carried out but preliminary results shows the virus is not closely related to the zoonotic H5N6 HPAI strains which have been circulating in poultry and wild birds in Eastern Asia, but it is more than likely a reassortant between H5N8 and a low pathogenicity H5N6 virus (Wageningen University, 2017).

Figure 2: Map of H5N6 outbreak, Flevoland, Netherlands on 08/12/2017 (source World Animal Health Organisation)



Conclusion and current advice

- Although the number of reported HPAI cases in Europe is much reduced in comparison with this time last year and up to April 2017, it is possible that the H5N8 virus could still be circulating in areas such as northern Europe and not causing the same high mortalities as last year. Therefore new incursions of H5N8 HPAI through wild bird migration from Europe remain a continuous risk up until February next year.
- Therefore poultry flock owners in Ireland, including owners of backyard poultry, should remain **vigilant to the threat of avian influenza** and should implement strategic biosecurity measures – in particular feeding birds indoors or under cover. Further information on preventative biosecurity measures can be found at:
https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/avian_influenza/avianinfluenzanews/
- Flock owners are also reminded to update their registration details, where necessary. A temporary, dedicated Poultry Registration and Update Unit has been established by the Department to facilitate this. The unit may be contacted on lo-call 0761064449 or by emailing PoultryRegUpdate@agriculture.gov.ie
- The situation in Europe will continue to be monitored closely by DAFM.

Further Reading

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) scientific opinion on avian influenza and the EFSA report on the H5N8 HPAI epizootic of 2016-2017:

<https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/4991>

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Animal & Plant Health Agency Assessment October 2017:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/avian-influenza-bird-flu-in-europe>

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