



Lessons from the 2020/21 outbreaks, EU Exit & new OIE AI chapter – opportunities and challenges for improved control of NAD

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Overview

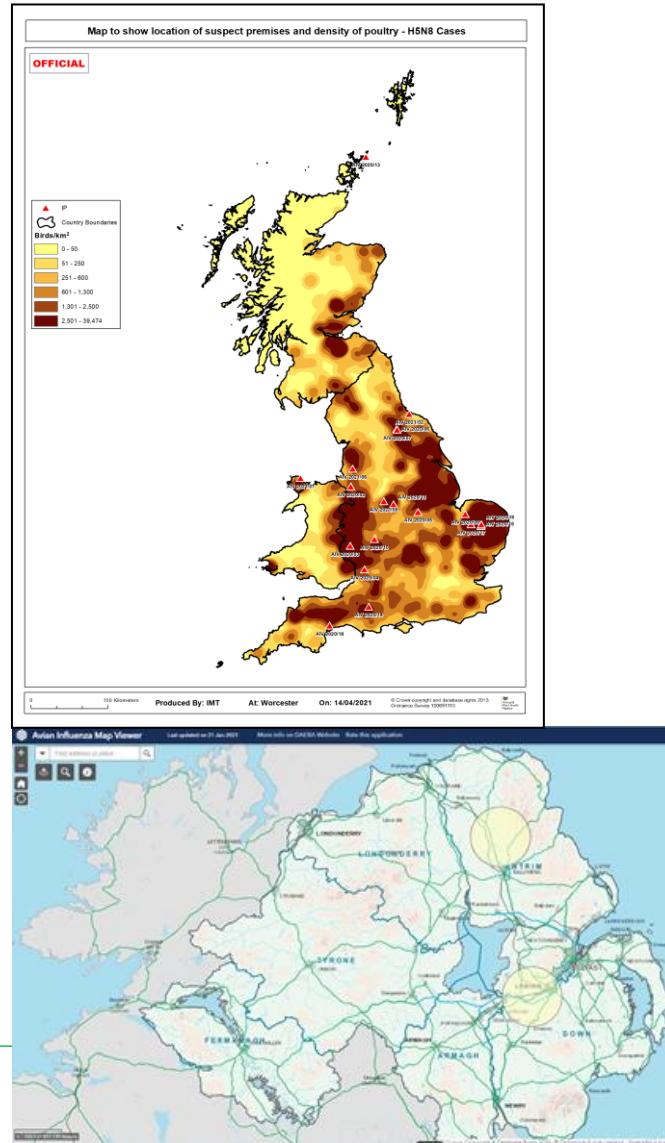
- Overview of the 2020/21 HPAI and LPAI outbreaks
- Lessons identified
- EU exit challenges & opportunities
- OIE chapter changes
- Next steps

Overview of the 2020/21 avian influenza outbreak(s)

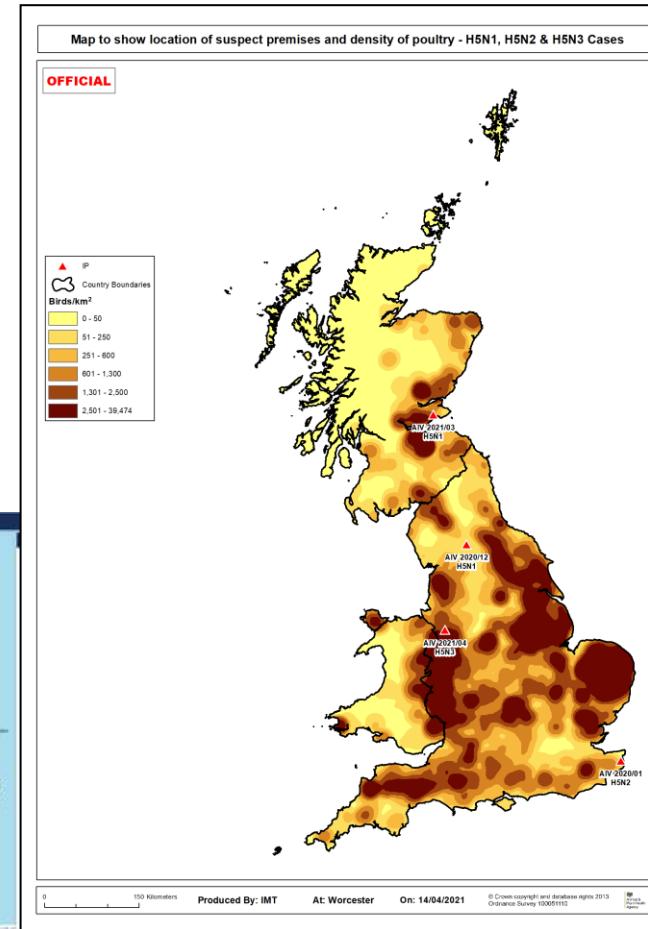
- Although managed as one, technically four concurrent outbreaks of avian influenza (i.e. 4 different virus strains)
- First IP on 2 November 2020 – last on 1 April 2021.
- Self-declared country freedom from 3 September (305 days – just over 10 months.....)
- 26 cases in total
- 22 cases of H5N8 highly pathogenic avian influenza
 - 18 in England
 - 1 in Scotland
 - 2 in Northern Ireland
 - 1 Wales
- 2 x cases of H5N1 (European strain) highly pathogenic avian influenza in N. Yorks & Glenrothes, Scotland
- 1 x case of H5N2 low path avian influenza (Kent)
- 1 x case of H5N3 low path avian influenza (Cheshire)

Not only the largest but also the most geographically widespread outbreak in UK history

Location of the HPAI H5N8 cases



Location of the HPAI H5N1 and LPAI H5N2 and H5N3 cases

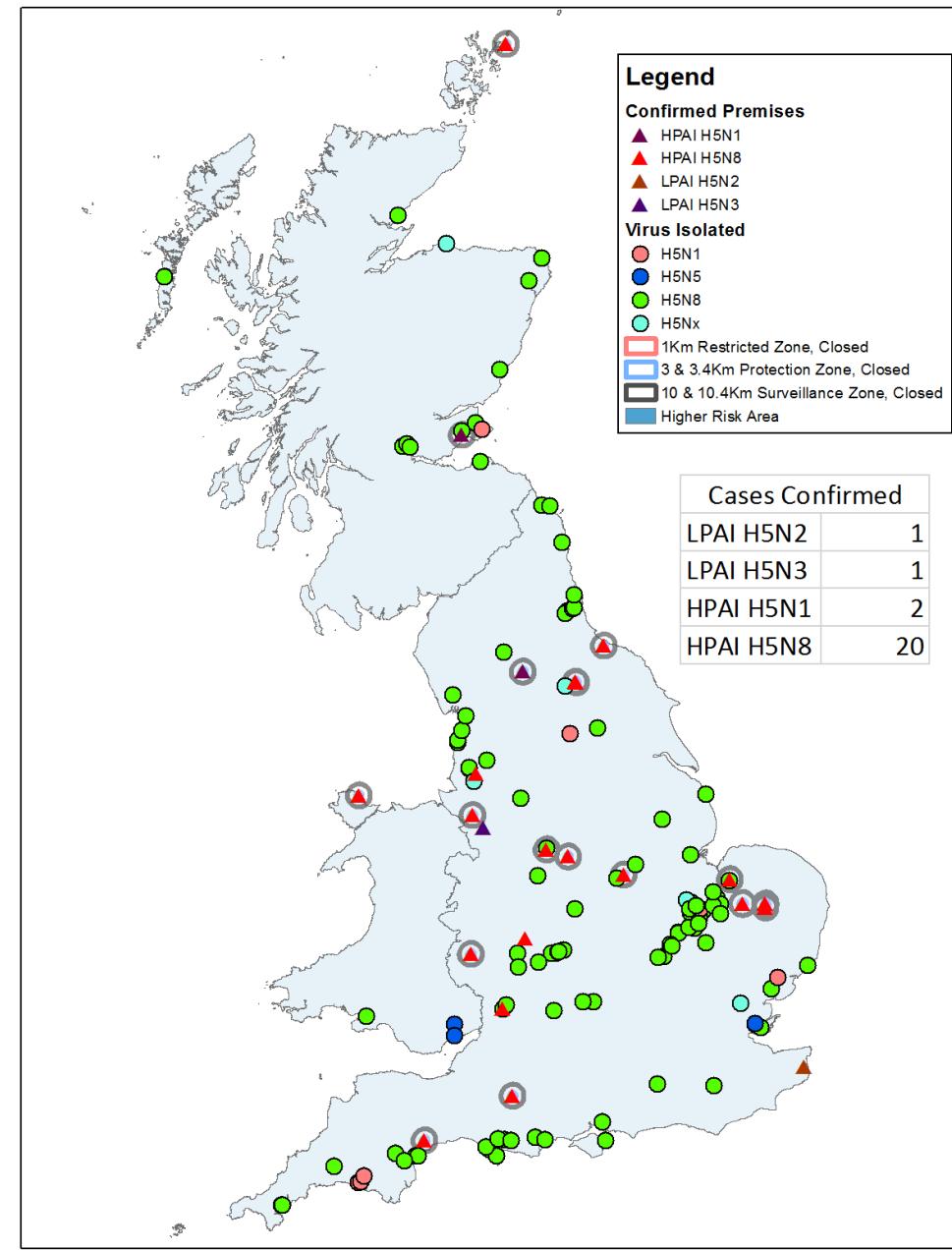


Affecting a very wide range systems and premises types

- 12 in large commercial poultry (*turkeys, ducks, broilers and layers*)
- 2 in housed commercial game birds
- 5 in smaller scale commercial poultry or captive birds (more than 50 birds kept for commercial purposes)
- 3 in backyard poultry
- 4 in captive birds (*non-poultry*) (*2 x birds of prey, 1 x wildlife rescue centre and 1 x wetland centre*)

Wild Bird Findings

- 311 Wild birds have tested positive for avian influenza in GB
- At 70 sites
- In 40 counties
- In 25 species.
- There have been findings in England, Wales, Scotland and also in Northern Ireland.
- We have had findings of H5N8, H5N5, H5N3 and H5N1



Epidemiology reports

- Epidemiology reports published on GOV.UK
- [Avian influenza \(bird flu\): epidemiology reports - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- ALL of the IPs in the current outbreak were attributed to direct or indirect initial introductions from wild birds
- No evidence of long distance spread between premises in this outbreak, apart from when the premises were located close together and were part of the same business

Avian influenza (bird flu): epidemiology reports

Investigations carried out to describe and explain cases of avian influenza (bird flu).

From: [Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs](#) and [Animal and Plant Health Agency](#)

Published 12 March 2015

Last updated 3 September 2021 — [See all updates](#)

Documents



[November 2020 to March 2021: two low pathogenicity avian influenza outbreaks in Great Britain \(H5N2 and H5N3\)](#)

PDF, 1.04MB, 33 pages

This file may not be suitable for users of assistive technology.

► [Request an accessible format.](#)



[November 2020 to April 2021: High pathogenicity avian influenza H5N8 and H5N1 outbreaks in Great Britain](#)

PDF, 8.66MB, 234 pages

This file may not be suitable for users of assistive technology.

► [Request an accessible format.](#)

Avian Influenza Preventive Controls

- An Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ) was declared in GB (effective from 5pm on the 11 November 2020)
- Additional housing measures introduced from 14 December 2020.
- The housing measures were lifted at 23.59 on 31 March but the AIPZ with mandatory biosecurity measures remained in force and were strengthened for any poultry that are allowed access to outdoor areas.
- The AIPZ was lifted on 15 May 2021
- All shows, markets and gatherings were banned on 14 December 2020
- Shows and gatherings for low risk captive birds permitted from 21 April

Additional preventive controls based on evidence and risk assessment

- Risk of incursion into wild birds in whole of GB is currently **LOW** at its peak in December through to February it was **VERY HIGH**
- The overall risk of exposure of poultry in GB is now **LOW** but at its peak it was **MEDIUM** (with stringent biosecurity) to **HIGH** (where there are biosecurity breaches).

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/941150/rapid-risk-assessment-H5N8-HPAI-housing-poultry-flocks-captive-birds.pdf





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Observations & Lessons identified

Observations / Lessons identified

Process & structures

- Challenges to APHA in delivering due to COVID – staff availability, compliance with Tier restrictions, access to premises, historical ways of working
- Despite this we successfully managed the outbreak virtually
- Very good collaboration between policy teams
- Key role of the notifiable avian disease core group
- Evidence of suboptimal biosecurity on many premises - perception that biosecurity in some cases has focussed on procedures rather than infrastructure (building maintenance and staff training)

Communication

- More use of webinars and social media
- More use of focus groups and targeted comms
- Use of a single point of contact for integrated companies
- Role of vets



Observations / Lessons identified (cont.)

Engagement

- More engagement with rescue centres and captive breeding sites
- Backyard flocks – voluntary vs mandatory registration and comms (new campaign planned)
- Targeted comms to birds of prey keepers

Legislation / Policy

- Risk based use of AIPZ at GB / UK level worked well in terms of a vehicle for communicating risk and facilitating enforcement
- Legislation needs reviewing in light of industry developments e.g. on-farm hatching
- New trading relationship with the EU and NI – some initial teething problems but good cooperation
- Review of the H5N1 in poultry and wild birds legislation

Observations / Lessons identified (cont.)

Guidance

- Valuation & compensation not well understood
- More guidance on C&D required and in particular on sequence of activities particularly where outdoor ranges involved

Procedures & IT

- Some issues with IT interfaces
- Need to key data more quickly to get a single version of the truth
- Better process flows for handling paperwork
- Need a single accessible portal for all admins and APHA to store risk assessments and licence templates



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EU Exit challenges & opportunities

EU Exit – Challenges and opportunities

Background

- Outbreak spanned the ending of the transition period and from 1 January GB treated as a third country and relationship for trade and movements to NI changed
- EU Animal Health Regulations came into force on 21 April 2021
- GB has retained the original EU legislation
- The new AHR controls broadly equivalent to current domestic legislation but arguably less flexible
- LPAI still listed but no longer a Cat A or B disease

EU Exit – Challenges and opportunities (cont.)

Challenges

- Third country rules apply, so whilst the EU have recognised PZ/SZ zoning for regionalisation, GB needs to demonstrate enhanced surveillance throughout the 10km restricted zone for 90 days.
- Restricted zone applies to all poultry reared in the 10km zone or slaughtered within the zone.
- Significant additional work in evidencing controls and surveillance incl. need to identify all premises and undertake random active surveillance in whole zone.
- New listed diseases - Avian mycoplasmosis and Avian chlamydiosis (*in psittacines*)
- Changes in export health certification from 15 January 2022
- Changes in requirements for approved establishments – PHS updated
- Labs undertaking official activities will need to be designated as official labs

EU Exit – Challenges and opportunities (cont.)

Opportunities

- Further streamline process and reduce the amount of information exchange
- Discuss the potential to remove or reduce the 90-day restricted zone
- Options for disease control for LPAI



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OIE Chapter changes & opportunities

OIE Chapter Changes – challenges & opportunities

- Several important changes agreed to the OIE Code on avian influenza at the May 2021 General Session
 - Change to the flock level incubation period
 - Change to the period that a country must wait to self-declare country freedom
 - Definition of poultry
 - LPAI no longer an OIE listed disease

OIE Terrestrial Code

CHAPTER 10.4.

INFECTION WITH HIGH PATHOGENICITY AVIAN INFLUENZA VIRUSES

Article 10.4.1.

General provisions

- This chapter deals with the *listed disease*, *infection* with high pathogenicity avian influenza viruses.
- For the purposes of the *Terrestrial Code*:
 - High pathogenicity avian influenza means an *infection* of *poultry* by any influenza A virus that has been determined as high pathogenicity in accordance with the *Terrestrial Manual*.
 - An occurrence of *infection* with a high pathogenicity avian influenza virus is defined by the isolation and identification of the virus or the detection of specific viral ribonucleic acid, in one or more samples from *poultry*.
 - The *incubation period* at the *flock*-level for high pathogenicity avian influenza is 14 days.

Previously 21 days – may be scope to reduce the back-tracing of product that is already ‘on the water’.

OIE Chapter Changes – challenges & opportunities (cont.)

Recovery of free status

If infection with high pathogenicity avian influenza virus has occurred in poultry in a previously free country or zone, the free status may be regained after a minimum period of **28 days** (i.e. two flock-level incubation periods) after a stamping-out policy has been completed (i.e. after the disinfection of the last affected establishment), provided that surveillance in accordance with Articles 10.4.26. to 10.4.30., in particular point 3 of Article 10.4.28., has been carried out during that period and has demonstrated the absence of infection.

Major advantage and have taken the opportunity to self-declare country freedom on 3 September (would have been 4 November under old guidance)

News story

Avian Influenza – UK declared free from bird flu but Chief Vet urges ongoing vigilance

The UK has been declared officially free from Avian Influenza (bird flu) following a major outbreak of the disease last winter

From: [Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs](#) and [Animal and Plant Health Agency](#)

Published 3 September 2021



The UK's Chief Veterinary Officer, Christine Middlemiss, declared today that international standards have been met to declare the country free from bird flu. However, she also reiterated calls for all poultry keepers to remain vigilant for signs of the disease as we move into this coming winter.

Highly pathogenic avian influenza continues to circulate in both wild and captive birds in Europe and as winter approaches the risk of migratory wild birds flying to the UK over the colder months will mean that the risks for domestic poultry are likely to rise.

Between November 2020 and March 2021, 26 cases of Avian Influenza were confirmed in kept poultry and wild birds in the UK. In all cases, movement restrictions were put in place to limit the spread of disease and carried out thorough investigations into the source and possible spread of infection.

The Government also introduced UK-wide measures to protect poultry from infection from wild birds, including a requirement to temporarily house birds and a ban on bird gatherings.

The UK Chief Veterinary Officer Christine Middlemiss said:

"The last year has been very challenging for all those who keep poultry and captive birds, and I would like to thank everyone for their efforts in helping us contain the disease. This is an important milestone that will help our efforts to re-open export markets."

OIE Chapter Changes – challenges & opportunities

POULTRY

means all birds reared or kept in captivity for the production of any commercial animal products or for breeding for this purpose, fighting cocks used for any purpose, and all birds used for restocking supplies of game or for breeding for this purpose, until they are released from captivity.

Birds that are kept in a single household, the products of which are used within the same household exclusively, are not considered poultry, provided that they have no direct or indirect contact with poultry or poultry facilities.

Birds that are kept in captivity for other reasons, including those that are kept for shows, racing, exhibitions, zoological collections and competitions, and for breeding or selling for these purposes, as well as pet birds, are not considered poultry, provided that they have no direct or indirect contact with poultry or poultry facilities.

This is not reflected in EU or domestic law but helpful and gives more leverage with trading partners when discussing regionalisation and trade restrictions



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Conclusions & Next Steps

Importance of contingency / business continuity plans

- Producers need to be prepared to be caught up in a zone
- Business Continuity Plan and a separate contingency plan should you become an IP
- May not be able to move birds to slaughter on the day you had originally planned
- May not be able to move table eggs to an egg packing centre
- If in a zone can only licence hatching eggs, day old chicks, POL pullets and birds to slaughter within or out of the zone.
- You cannot move ‘brood and move’ rearing birds or game birds
- Cannot release game birds in zones
- Need to be prepared for mandatory housing
- There may be restrictions or bans on export from affected areas for some considerable time

Next steps

UK policy teams will work together with industry to:

- Review of policies & legislation – engagement & consultation
- Embed the lessons identified in process and guidance
- Work with industry on contingency and business continuity plans
- Raise awareness of threats as we move into the higher risk period
- Actively engage with harder to reach groups – backyard, rescue centres, captive bird keepers etc.
- Highlight and communicate areas where biosecurity can be improved
- Reinforce the need for ongoing vigilance

Questions and Discussion

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/avian-influenza-bird-flu>