

Bird flu in Europe and Great Britain, autumn 2026

Information as at 27 October 2026. Every figure carries its source and date. Places are given no more precisely than the official source gives them, and no premises is named.

Summary

- Great Britain has confirmed highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in poultry twice since the season began on 1 October: H5N5 on the Isle of Lewis on 2 October and H5N1 in Northumberland on 19 October.
- Ten wild birds found dead in Great Britain tested positive between 5 and 25 October, nine of them with H5N1. Seven were in south-east and eastern England.
- In Europe the virus has reached poultry farms in the north. Denmark and Germany each reported H5N1 on two farms, with outbreaks starting between 22 and 24 October. Wild bird outbreaks in the EU's weekly reports rose from three a week in mid to late September to ten in the week to 21 October.
- The government's risk levels, as published on 21 October: wild birds **MEDIUM**. Poultry **LOW** where biosecurity is suboptimal or poor and **VERY LOW** where it is stringent, both with high uncertainty. No housing order or prevention zone is in force in England: housing was lifted on 9 April and the zones on 4 June 2026.

1. The situation

Great Britain: poultry

The bird flu season is counted from 1 October to 30 September. GOV.UK lists two confirmed cases of HPAI in UK poultry so far this season.

Table 1. Cases of HPAI in UK poultry, 2026 to 2027 season

Confirmed	Place, as published	Virus	Notes
2 October 2026	Ness, Isle of Lewis, Scotland (AIV 2026/20)	H5N5	Commercial backyard poultry. The first case of the season, after which Great Britain lost its freedom from HPAI.
19 October 2026	Near Belford, North Northumberland, Northumberland (AIV 2026/21)	H5N1	Commercial poultry. All poultry on the premises to be humanely culled.

Each case has a 3 km protection zone and a 10 km surveillance zone. Wales and Northern Ireland have had no cases. Source: GOV.UK, Bird flu: latest situation in England, updated 21 October 2026 [1].

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Last season GOV.UK counted 100 confirmed cases of HPAI in the UK. In Great Britain, infected premises peaked at 14 a week in early November 2025, then fell to fewer than one a week on average in March and April 2026, with none from mid-April to the end of September [1, 2].

Great Britain: wild birds

The government's weekly figures show 10 wild birds that tested positive for HPAI in Great Britain in the weeks from 5 to 25 October, and none in the week before [3]. Nine had H5N1. One, a crow on the Western Isles, had H5N5, the same subtype as the Isle of Lewis poultry case.

The birds were three pheasants in Kent, two red kites (Berkshire and Northamptonshire), a sparrowhawk (East Sussex), a greenfinch (Suffolk), a duck (Norfolk) and a pigeon or dove (South Yorkshire).

These are birds found dead and reported by the public. APHA notes that this surveillance does not necessarily capture all the cases that occur, so the figures show where the virus has been found, not everywhere it is [2].

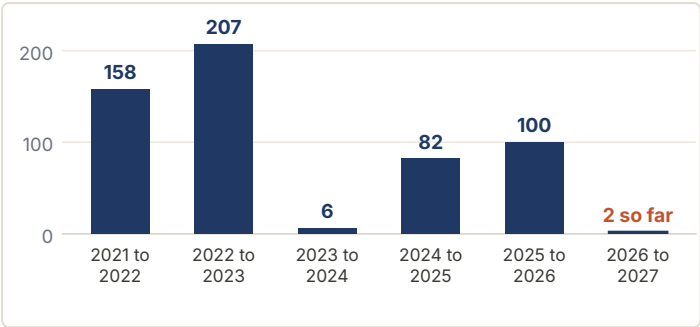


Figure 1. Confirmed HPAI cases in the UK by season, as counted by GOV.UK. Hatched: the season so far, to 27 October 2026. Source: GOV.UK, updated 21 October 2026 [1].



Figure 2. Great Britain, 1 to 25 October 2026: the two cases in poultry and the wild birds that tested positive, at county level. Sources: GOV.UK [1], and Defra and APHA, Bird flu: cases in wild birds, 2026 to week 43, updated 26 October 2026 [3]. Boundaries: Natural Earth.

Europe

The EU's weekly ADIS report for 15 to 21 October lists 10 outbreaks of HPAI in wild birds: 3 in Denmark, 2 each in the Netherlands and Norway, and 1 each in Belgium, Germany and Italy. It also lists 1 outbreak in poultry (Bulgaria) and 1 in captive birds (Albania) [8]. In each of the weeks to 16 and 23 September there were three wild bird cases [2].

Since the end of September, countries from Iceland to Cyprus have reported new HPAI events to the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH). The newest in poultry are on farms in Denmark and Germany (Table 2 and Figure 3).

Table 2. New HPAI events in Europe reported to WOAAH between 27 September and 26 October 2026

Country	Area	Birds affected	First outbreak	Source of infection, as reported
POULTRY AND OTHER KEPT BIRDS				
Denmark	Zealand and Lolland	Poultry on 2 farms: 67,000 birds, 26,400 culled	22 Oct	Unknown or inconclusive
Germany	Schleswig-Holstein	Poultry on 2 farms: 1,200 birds, 750 culled	23 Oct	Unknown or inconclusive
Albania	Durrës	A backyard flock of 15 ducks and geese	9 Oct	Unknown or inconclusive
France	Maine-et-Loire	Poultry, 3 outbreaks: 20,060 birds	30 Aug	Contact with wild species
Belgium	Flanders	Captive birds at 2 sites, 372 culled, and a wild wigeon	25 Sep	Contact with wild species
Germany	North Rhine-Westphalia	28 captive waterfowl in quarantine	24 Sep	Unknown or inconclusive
WILD AND OTHER NON-POULTRY BIRDS				
Latvia	Western Latvia (Saldus)	Wigeon, teal and shoveler. H5, a strain new to the country	10 Oct	Unknown or inconclusive
Romania	Brăila	A mallard and a lesser white-fronted goose	20 Oct	Unknown or inconclusive
Serbia	South Banat	A common buzzard	8 Oct	Unknown or inconclusive
Denmark	Zealand, Lolland and Falster	4 outbreaks, including a greylag goose	24 Sep	Unknown or inconclusive
Norway	Akershus	A greylag goose. H5, N type not reported	25 Sep	Unknown or inconclusive
Cyprus	Nicosia	A greylag goose	23 Sep	Unknown or inconclusive
Sweden	Skåne	A grey heron	21 Sep	Unknown or inconclusive
Iceland	Coastal sites	Gulls and skuas, 8 outbreaks. H5N5	10 Sep	Unknown or inconclusive

Events whose first outbreak was on or after 1 August 2026. Great Britain's events are in Table 1 and Figure 2. All H5N1 unless stated. Source: WOAAH WAHIS, read 27 October 2026 (event numbers in source 9).



Figure 3. New HPAI events in Europe reported to WOAAH between 27 September and 26 October 2026, placed at the centre of the region or, where the report gives no region, of the country. Hatching marks every country with a bird flu report to WOAAH in the period, including follow-ups to older events. Source: WOAAH WAHIS [9]. Boundaries: Natural Earth.

2. How it got there: what the official reports say

WOAH's reports record a source of infection for each event. For the poultry outbreaks in Denmark and Germany, the backyard ducks and geese in Albania, and both cases in British poultry, the source is recorded as "unknown or inconclusive". Germany's report on 28 captive waterfowl in quarantine adds that investigations suggest the virus came in with the birds, which had arrived from another EU country on 18 September. France's report on its three poultry outbreaks in Maine-et-Loire records "contact with wild species", as do Belgium's report on its outbreaks in captive birds and the United Kingdom's report on its H5N1 wild bird findings. Belgium's report links its two sites through ducks bought from the first [9].

The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) explained the seasonal pattern in its assessment of 30 September, which advised raising the risk to wild birds from low to medium. GOV.UK changed the published level on 1 October [1, 2]. The autumn migration of ducks, geese and swans into Great Britain reaches its peak rate in late September and early October and continues into November. Many of these birds fly through Norway, Sweden and Denmark, where APHA reported HPAI H5N1 increasing in greylag geese. Others reach Scotland through Iceland, where HPAI was reported in the spring.

APHA singled out resident waterbirds. In August and September a Canada goose in north Wales and a mallard in Aberdeenshire tested positive, and APHA notes that "detection and spread of HPAI H5N1 in resident waterbirds is associated with a direct risk to poultry" [2].

APHA also sets out how the virus gets into a flock. Direct contact happens when wild birds get into housing or onto the range. Indirect contact happens through droppings that contaminate feed, water, bedding, equipment, vermin, or clothing and footwear. It asks for special care with equipment, bedding and packaging that has been stored outside [2]. In 2021 APHA's scientists wrote that they "would usually expect to see the first cases in late autumn with the peak risk occurring between December and February" [12]. Last season came earlier: infected premises in Great Britain peaked at 14 a week in early November 2025 [2].

3. What it means in the UK

Table 3. The government's risk levels for HPAI H5 in Great Britain, as published. OutbreakLens does not set a risk level of its own.

Risk	Level	Uncertainty
HPAI H5 in wild birds	MEDIUM (event occurs regularly)	Not stated
Poultry exposure where biosecurity is suboptimal or poor	LOW (event occurs rarely)	High
Poultry exposure where stringent biosecurity is consistently applied at all times	VERY LOW (event occurs very rarely)	High

Source: GOV.UK, Bird flu: latest situation in England, updated 21 October 2026 [1].

APHA's assessment of 30 September gave the uncertainty as medium where biosecurity is suboptimal and low where it is stringent. GOV.UK's update of 21 October gives high uncertainty for both [1, 2]. APHA's assessment adds that "low and very low risk levels do not mean no risk" and that "the measures in an AIPZ should be seen as good practice" [2].

For people and food, GOV.UK restates that the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) advises the risk to the general public's health is very low. The Food Standards Agency (FSA) says bird flu poses a very low food safety risk for UK consumers, and properly cooked poultry and poultry products, including eggs, are safe to eat [1].

Restrictions in force. Mandatory housing for poultry and for flocks of more than 50 captive birds was lifted in England and Wales from 9 April 2026 [14], and the avian influenza prevention zones (AIPZs) across Great Britain from noon on 4 June 2026 [11]. GOV.UK's latest situation page, updated 21 October, lists no new prevention zone or housing order for England since then [1]. The two cases each have their own 3 km and 10 km zones, with rules for keepers inside them [1]. Scotland and Wales publish their own measures.

Last season, for reference only. This is history, not a forecast. A housing order covered the whole of England from 6 November 2025 for keepers of more than 50 birds and for anyone who sold or gave away eggs [10].

4. What keepers and owners can do

These points come from the published guidance. Follow the guidance itself, and talk to your vet about your own birds.

Keepers of poultry and other birds

- **Register your birds.** You must register within one month of keeping poultry or other captive birds at any premises, whether you keep fewer than 50 or more [4].
- **Keep wild birds away from feed and water.** Keep food, water and bedding in covered, enclosed areas that wild birds and rodents cannot reach. Fence off or net ponds and standing water [4].
- **Keep ducks and geese apart** from other birds. They do not always show signs of bird flu [4].
- **Use clean clothing and footwear,** a foot dip with a Defra-approved disinfectant or boots that stay in each bird house, and keep a record of visitors [4].
- **Check new birds' health** before they arrive and keep them apart from the flock at first [4].
- **Funding.** Poultry keepers with a minimum number of chickens, ducks, geese or turkeys can apply for funding for a vet to carry out a biosecurity review [4].

Report it

If you suspect bird flu in your birds, report it straight away: in England on 03000 200 301, in Wales on 0300 303 8268, in Scotland to your local Field Services Office. In Northern Ireland, see the DAERA website [1, 2].

Report dead wild birds online or on the Defra helpline, 03459 33 55 77. Do not touch them [2, 6].

Pet owners

GOV.UK has advice on keeping cats, dogs and other pets safe from bird flu [7].

Check your own set-up

The free OutbreakLens biosecurity self-check for poultry ranks the routes into a flock against published evidence. It is a first version: some routes still use placeholder values, and vets and keepers have not yet reviewed it. It keeps nothing and is not official advice:
outbreaklens.com/tools/biosecurity-check

5. Sources

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