



An Roinn Talmhaíochta,  
Bia agus Mara  
Department of Agriculture,  
Food and the Marine

Published 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2023

# Avian Influenza Update

2<sup>nd</sup> June 2023

**National Disease Control Centre**

**Number 3 of 2023**

## Enhanced biosecurity regulations lifted on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2023

- The **Avian Influenza (Biosecurity Measures) Regulations 2022** (S.I. 462/2022), introduced in September 2022, were **lifted on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2023**
- Regulations which required the confinement of poultry and captive birds, introduced in November 2022, were lifted on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2023
- Although the legal requirement for certain biosecurity measures are withdrawn, high biosecurity standards should remain as best practice and help to protect flocks against all poultry disease, not just avian influenza (see biosecurity advice below)

## Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza: Current Situation in Ireland

- Since the last update (on 13<sup>th</sup> April), HPAI H5N1 was detected in wild birds (black headed gulls) in Co. Wexford
- No outbreaks of HPAI have been confirmed in poultry or captive birds in Ireland since two outbreaks occurred in poultry flocks in Co. Monaghan in November 2022

## Risk to Ireland regarding HPAI

- Avian Influenza is **highly contagious for birds**. The virus may still be present in the environment and can be transmitted to poultry or captive birds by wild birds
- Flock owners should continue to maintain best **practice biosecurity measures** to prevent the introduction of avian influenza into poultry and captive bird flocks. A risk of incursion of the virus through infected wild birds or residual environmental contamination remains.
- The reduction in the risk level is based on a number of parameters which include decreasing wild bird infection pressure, reducing numbers of migratory waterfowl and increasing environmental temperatures and daylight hours
- Flock owners should remain **vigilant for any signs of disease in their flocks**, and report any disease suspicion to their nearest Regional Veterinary Office
- Poultry owners and those working with poultry should beware of visiting areas, both at home and abroad, where deaths of wild birds have occurred (e.g., coastal areas, bird colonies, etc.). Direct contact with sick or dead wild birds must be avoided
- Members of the public are reminded **not to touch sick or dead wild birds**. Dogs should be kept on a lead when walking in areas where sick or dead wild birds are present.

## Avian influenza situation in wild birds in Ireland

- During April 2023, HPAI H5N1 was found in black headed gulls in Co. Wexford
- An interactive map (for illustrative purposes) courtesy of the Centre for Veterinary Epidemiology and Risk Analysis (CVERA) displaying the location of avian influenza cases in wild and captive birds is available at the following link <https://arcg.is/19zHrf0>

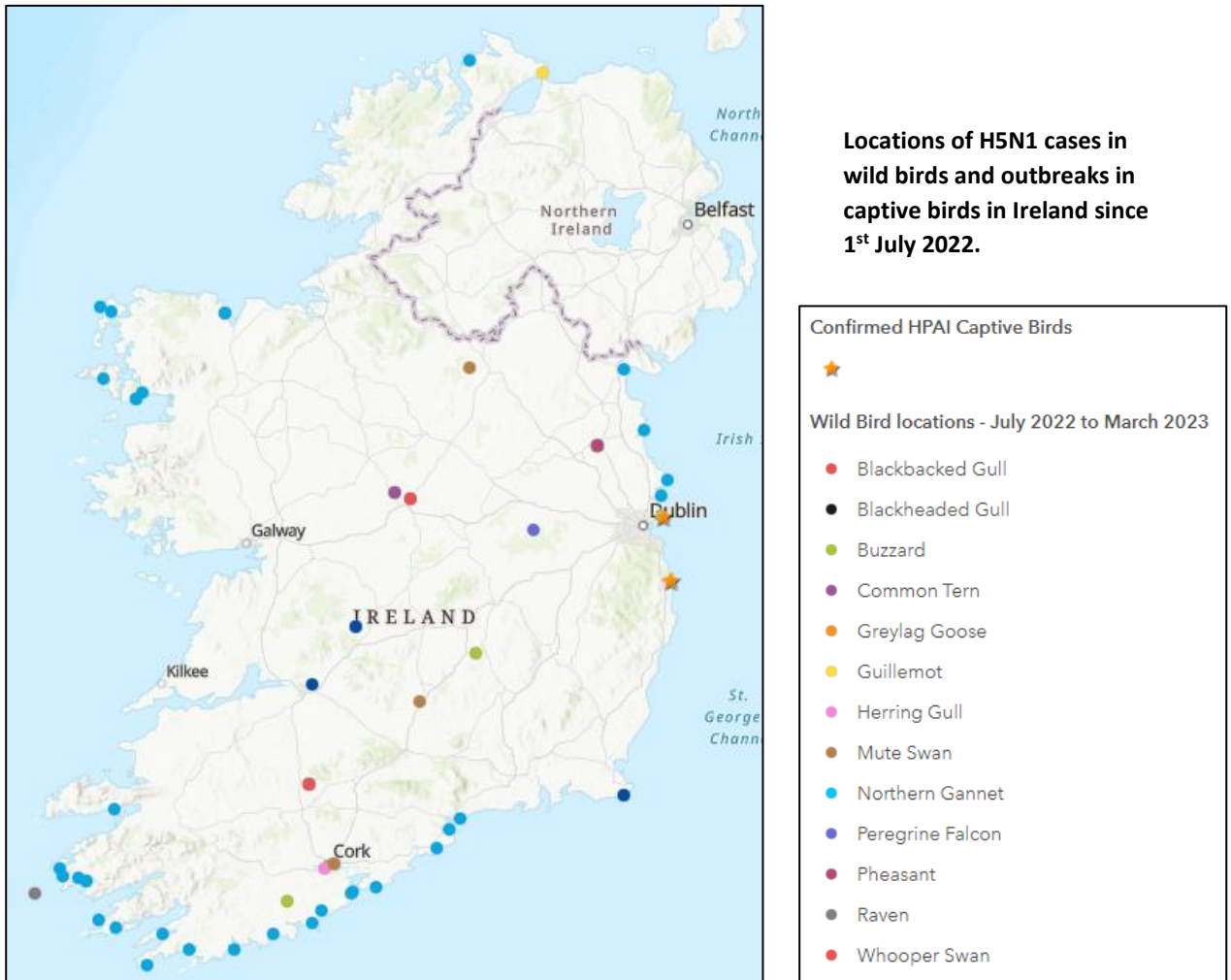


Fig. 1. Locations of H5N1 avian influenza cases in wild birds and outbreaks in captive birds in Ireland since 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022.

## Avian Influenza situation in Northern Ireland

- On 16<sup>th</sup> October, HPAI H5N1 was confirmed in captive birds at a Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT) near Strangford Lough. A 3km Captive Bird Monitoring Zone has been implemented in the surrounding area to mitigate against onward disease spread

- On 17<sup>th</sup> October, an Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ) was declared across Northern Ireland. The AIPZ places a legal requirement on all bird keepers in Northern Ireland to follow strict biosecurity measures.

## Strict Biosecurity is Essential to Prevent Outbreaks

**All poultry owners and keepers must implement very high levels of biosecurity on their holdings to help protect their flocks due to the current situation.** All flock owners should ask themselves the following questions to help ensure you are implementing appropriate measures:

### 1. Who has access to the poultry areas?

Only allow **essential** persons access to the poultry houses e.g. husbandry, veterinary care. Ensure that dedicated clothing or disposable personal protective equipment (PPE) is worn including disposable gloves and overalls. Clean and disinfect boots before entering and immediately upon exiting each poultry house. Wash hands each time upon leaving a poultry house. Dedicated personnel should be appointed to manage each site

### 2. Have I checked the disinfectant points?

All disinfectant points must be maintained. **Read the label** on the disinfectant which is approved for use against avian influenza. Disinfectant footbaths must be changed regularly in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Contamination prevents the effective use of disinfectants. Footwear needs to be cleaned thoroughly before being disinfected in foot dips. **Wait the recommended contact time before entering the house.** Repeat checks with disinfectant points at entry and exit points to the premises

### 3. Can wild birds get access to the poultry?

Inspect the housing thoroughly. Ensure that there are no gaps where wild birds can enter the housing. Check the gutters and roof. Can contaminated rainwater enter the house? Can wild birds get access to or contaminate the drinking water system?

### 4. Is the feed and bedding stored securely?

Feed and bedding attract wild birds so secure storage of both is essential. If using straw, ensure it is either double wrapped and covered with a birdproof cover or stored in a shed with no wild bird access. Remove wrapping outside of the house. Feed should be stored in a secure bin and any spills cleaned up immediately. Use wild bird deterrents

### 5. What do I do about feed delivery/egg collection vehicles that have to come onto the holding?

Disinfect wheels, wheel arches and underbody of all vehicles coming before allowing them to enter the premises and prior to leaving the premises. Do not allow any drivers to enter poultry houses. Ensure that drivers wear disposable gloves and disinfect footwear upon arrival (ensure that there is a disinfectant point near the feed bin/egg storage area)

### 6. What about equipment?

Any equipment that is used to transport poultry or poultry products must be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected prior to being used on the farm e.g., trolleys, trays, pallets, cages etc. Disposable single-use egg trays or plastic Keyes trays which are thoroughly cleaned and disinfected after each use can be used for egg collections. Don't forget about other equipment such as feeders and watering equipment and clean and disinfect equipment and housing between bird placements

## **7. Be vigilant**

Check the feed and water intake and look for clinical signs of avian influenza. Report any suspicions immediately to DAFM and do not allow anyone on/off the premises pending investigation

### **Further information regarding Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza H5N1**

- The disease poses no food safety risk for consumers. Properly cooked poultry and poultry products, including eggs are safe to eat
- From October onwards each year we enter into the higher risk period for Avian Influenza in Ireland. Colder weather and decreasing daylight can extend the survival time of Avian influenza viruses in the environment
- This is due to the fact that migratory wild birds, the natural hosts of many avian influenza viruses, start to arrive in large numbers to overwinter here
- Migratory wild birds are known to carry the H5N1 subtype of Avian influenza, and this can increase the level of risk for a potential outbreak of Avian influenza in Ireland
- HPAI H5N1 is a notifiable disease both in Ireland and to the European Commission and the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH, formed known as OIE)
- Outbreaks of HPAI H5N1 in poultry in Ireland impact upon our international trade in poultry and poultry products
- The disease is highly contagious for birds, but risk of transmission to humans is considered very low.

### **DAFM surveillance for avian influenza**

- Sick or dead wild birds can be reported to DAFM using the **Avian Check - Wild Bird App** <https://aviancheck.apps.services.agriculture.gov.ie/>
- Alternatively, sick or dead wild birds may be reported to the local Regional Veterinary Office or contact the DAFM disease hotline on 01 607 2512 (during office hours) or 01 492 8026 (outside office hours)
- Where the Department has sufficient epidemiological surveillance information in particular geographical areas, it will not necessarily collect dead birds for testing

- DAFM has sufficient evidence of HPAI H5N1 in wild birds in coastal counties. As such, DAFM has stopped collecting birds for surveillance purposes from coastal counties. Surveillance continues as per current protocols in other counties (1 or more bird of prey-including owls, 3 or more waterfowl-including gulls, 5 or more of any other species of bird)
- Where dead wild birds are not required for surveillance purposes, and are present on public land, it is the responsibility of the local authority to safely dispose of the carcasses
- DAFM implements avian influenza surveillance measures which take place right throughout the year in both wild birds and poultry and form part of our well-established Early Warning System for the detection of avian influenza. The submission of dead wild birds which are on the target species list for avian influenza surveillance for testing, based on a risk assessment, at the Central Veterinary Research Laboratory forms part of this programme.

### Current Situation in poultry and captive birds in Europe

- Since October 2021, Europe has experienced its largest epidemic of HPAI with over 3,000 outbreaks in poultry and 50 million birds culled in affected establishments ([EFSA, 2022](#))

#### Outbreaks of HPAI in poultry and captive birds during May 2023

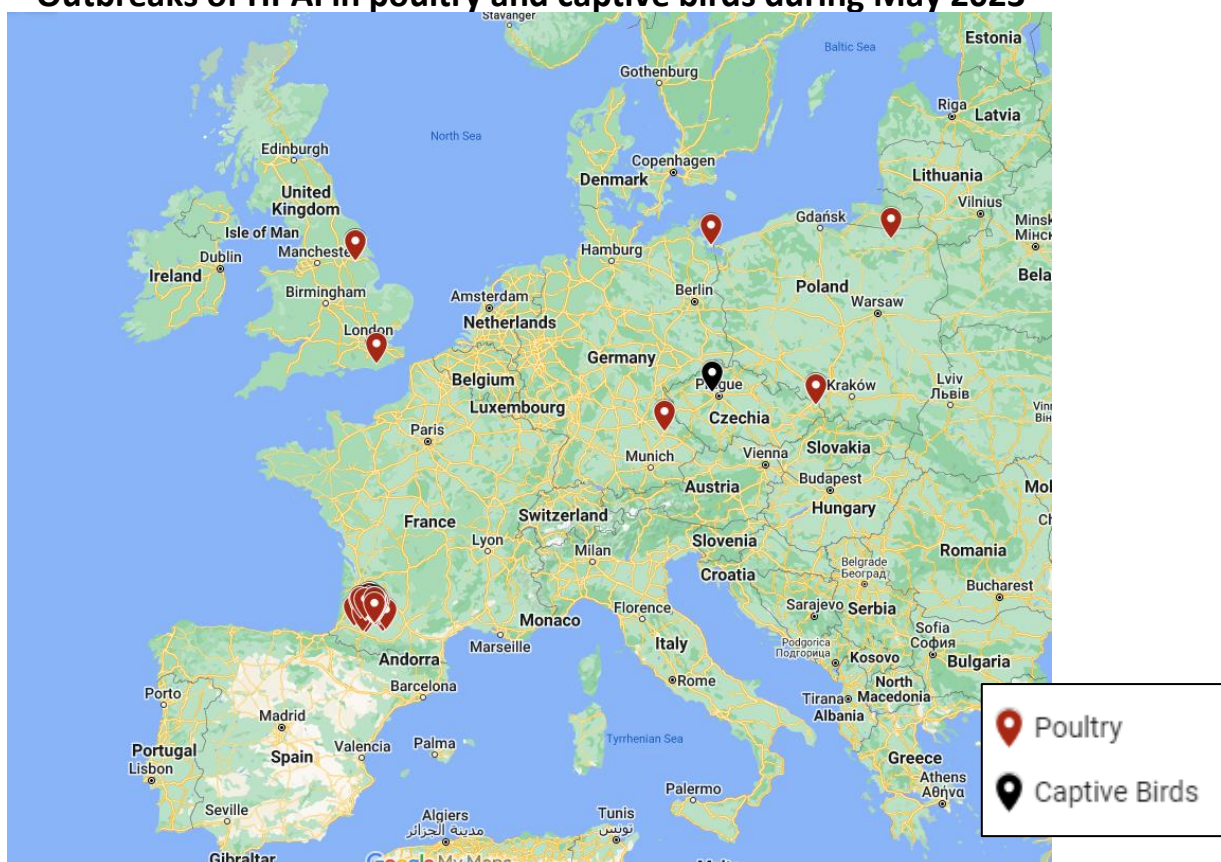


Fig. 2. Locations of outbreaks of HPAI in poultry (red icon) and captive birds (black icon) confirmed in Europe during the May 2023 (Source: ADIS and WAHIS).

- Since 1<sup>st</sup> October 2022 Northern Ireland reported one outbreak of avian influenza in captive birds
- Since 1<sup>st</sup> October 2022 England confirmed 155 outbreaks of HPAI, 21 in Scotland, and eight in Wales
- The Animal and Plant Health Agency's (APHA) interactive map of restriction zones in England, Scotland and Wales is available to view [here](#)

### Current wild bird situation in the rest of Europe

- HPAI H5N1 is currently circulating in wild birds across Europe. Black-headed gulls continue to be heavily affected, while also other threatened wild bird species, such as the peregrine falcon, showed increased mortality ([EFSA](#))
- Locations of HPAI confirmed in wild birds in the Europe during May 2023 can be found in Fig. 3
- DAERA's interactive map viewer displaying locations of cases of avian influenza in wild birds in Northern Ireland which is available to view [here](#)

### Cases of HPAI in wild birds in May 2023

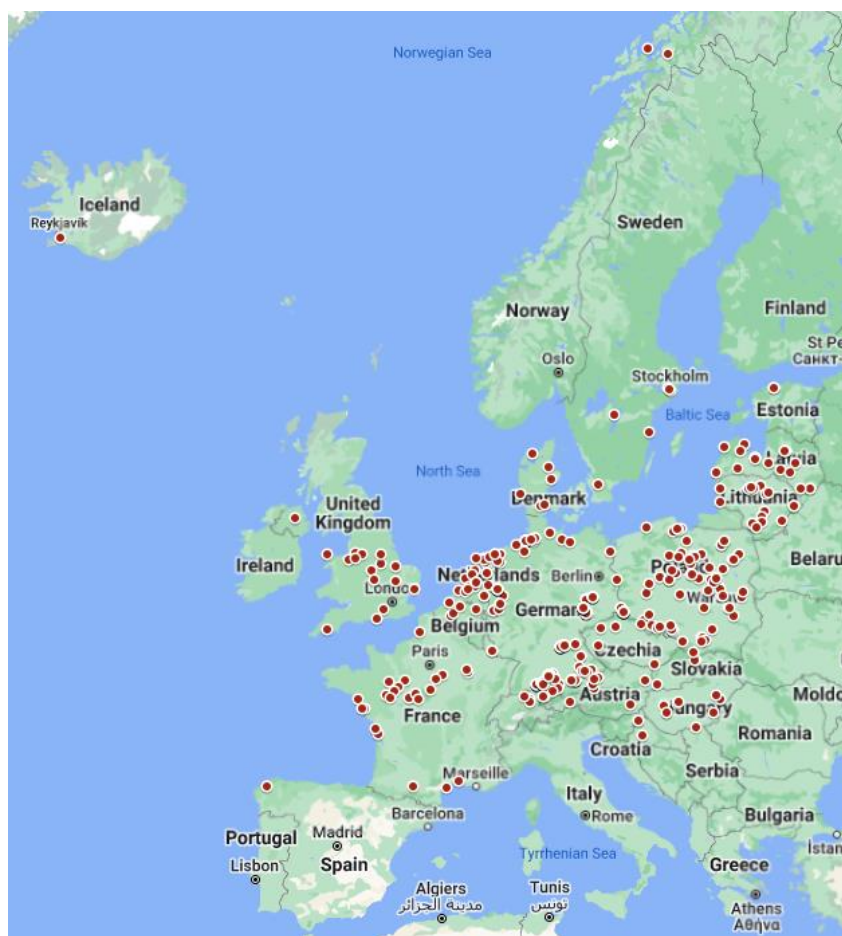


Fig. 3. Locations of HPAI reported in wild birds in Europe in May 2023 (Source: ADIS and WAHIS).

## Current global Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza situation

- HPAI continues to be reported in poultry and wild birds globally
- HPAI has continued to spread southward in the Americas, from Mexico to southern Chile. Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Panama, Peru, and Venezuela have detected the presence of HPAI for the first time ([WOAH, 2023](#)). The Peruvian pelican was the most frequently reported infected species with thousands of deaths being reported ([EFSA, 2023](#)).
- The global distribution of outbreaks/ cases in poultry and wild birds during the period 2<sup>nd</sup> March to 28<sup>th</sup> April 2023 can be found in Fig. 4
- HPAI has been reported in a wide range of mammals worldwide. The geographical distribution of HPAI viruses in mammals that have been reported since 2016 are presented in Fig. 5

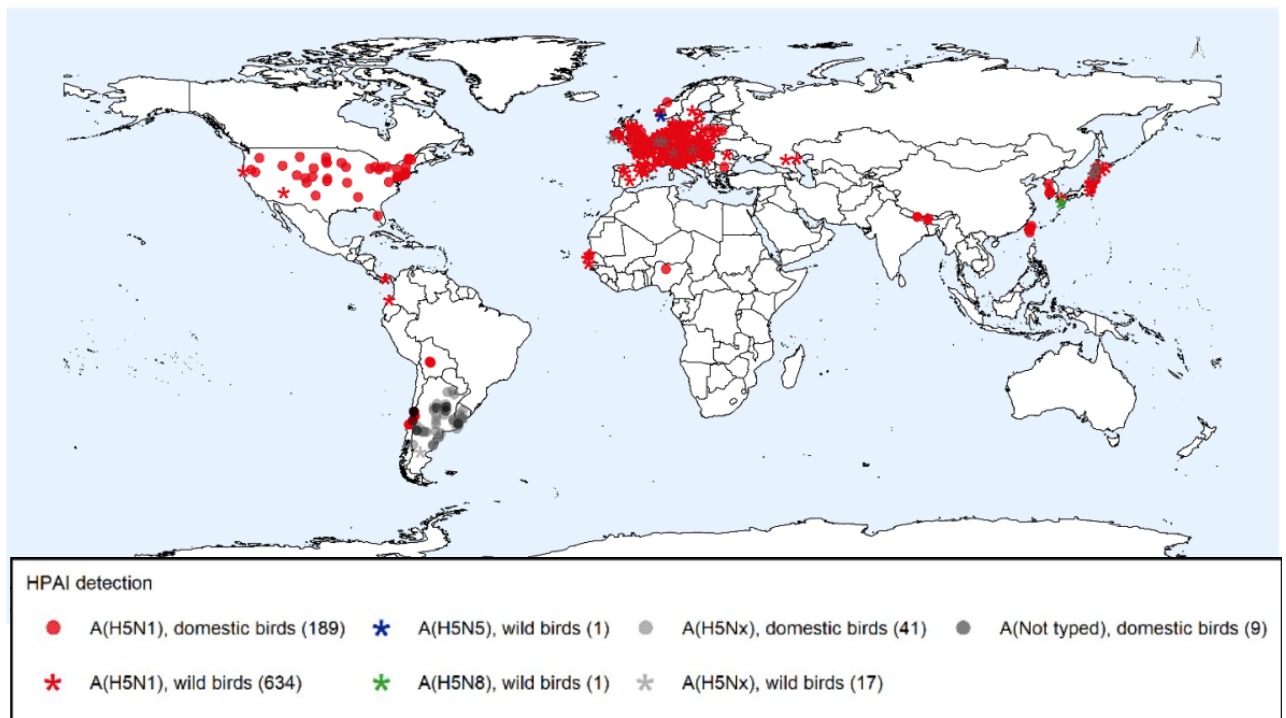


Fig. 4. Geographical distribution of HPAI virus detections reported in domestic birds and wild birds by virus type, from 2 March to 28 April 2023 (Source: [EFSA](#)).



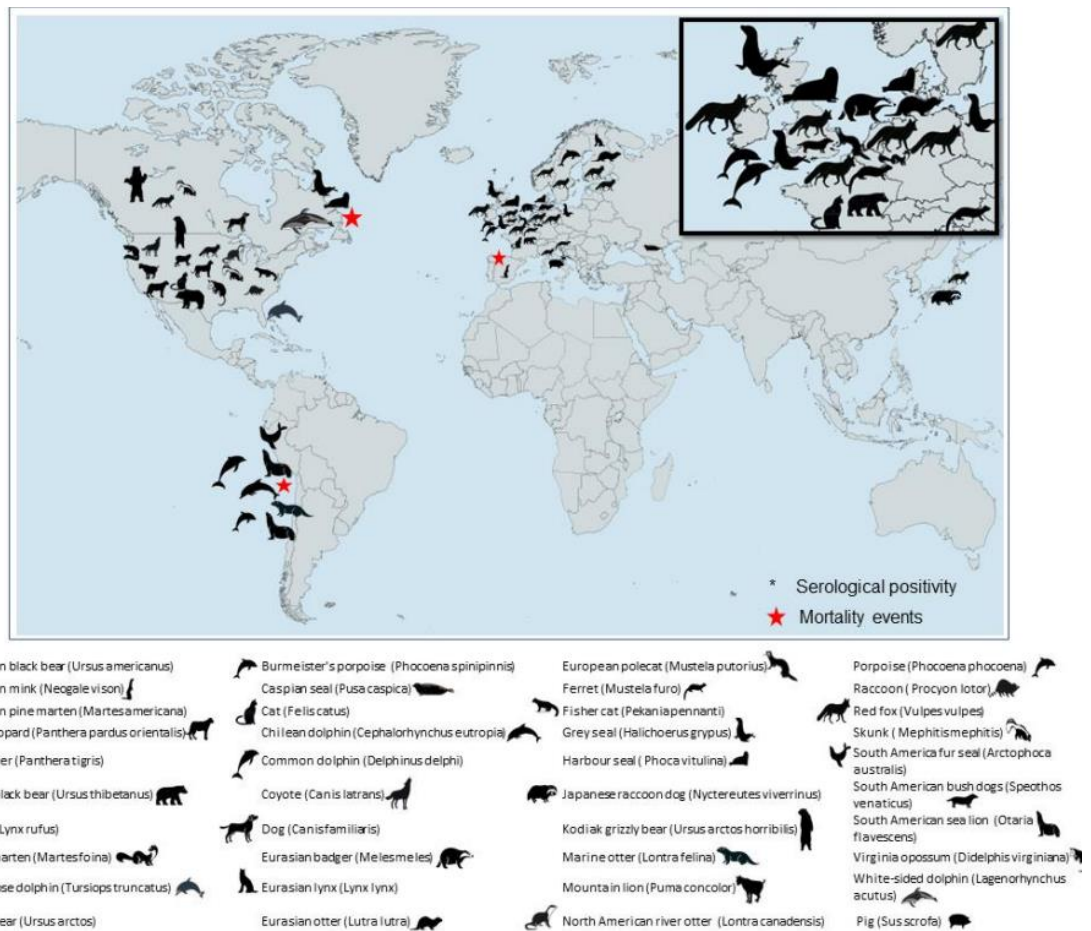


Fig. 5. Geographical distribution of detections of HPAI in mammals since 2016 (Source: [EFSA](#)).

## What can poultry owners do to reduce the risk of avian influenza?

- Flock owners should **remain vigilant for any unexplained signs of disease** in their flocks, and report any disease suspicion to their nearest [Regional Veterinary Office](#)

**1. Be vigilant-** Monitor your birds carefully for any clinical signs of disease. If in doubt, contact your veterinary practitioner for advice. Signs of avian influenza include:

- Death/high mortalities in a flock
- Depression/lethargy
- Loss of appetite
- Respiratory distress such as gaping beak, coughing, sneezing, gurgling, rattling
- Swelling and blue discolouration of combs, wattles, neck and throat
- Diarrhoea
- Reduced egg production or no egg production

## 2. Biosecurity

A copy of the Avian Influenza (Biosecurity measures) Regulations 2022, accompanying guidance document and additional species specific biosecurity leaflets can be found [here](#).

### Personnel and Visitors

- Wear disposable or dedicated outer clothing when in contact with your birds
- Wear boots that can be disinfected, disposable gloves and wash hands after contact with poultry
- Only allow essential personnel access to your birds

### Buildings and Equipment

- Regularly clean and disinfect hard surfaces such as paths and walkways
- Provide clean boot washing and disinfection facilities at all entrances/exits and ensure that people use them
- Clean and disinfect any vehicles or equipment that comes into contact with the birds after use
- Have suitable pest control in place

### Wild Birds

- Feed and water birds inside or at least under cover
- Clean up any waste feed in outdoor areas frequently
- Use netting or wild bird decoys or deterrents to keep wild birds away from poultry areas

### Management

- Keep ducks and geese separate to other poultry species
- The Department also reminds all poultry owners, including those who keep only 1 or 2 birds, of their legal obligation to register their premises with the Department.
- Use an [approved disinfectant](#) against Avian influenza in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

## Further information:

DAFM has a wide variety of biosecurity resources for avian influenza- please see:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/7e230-poultry/>

To register a poultry flock:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/service/984df6-poultry-register/>

RVO contact details:

[Regional Veterinary Office](#)

List of target species of wild birds for avian influenza surveillance:

[List of Target Species for Avian Influenza Surveillance](#)

European Commission

[https://ec.europa.eu/food/animals/animal-diseases/diseases-and-control-measures/avianinfluenza\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/food/animals/animal-diseases/diseases-and-control-measures/avianinfluenza_en)

World Organisation for Animal Health:

[Avian Influenza - WOA - World Organisation for Animal Health](#)

European Food Safety Authority:

<https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/topics/topic/avian-influenza>

**National Disease Control Centre**

*2<sup>nd</sup> June 2023*