

Voluntary Report – Voluntary - Public Distribution

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Report Name: Avian Influenza Returns to Hungary

Country: Hungary

Post: Budapest

Report Category: Agricultural Situation, Sanitary/Phytosanitary/Food Safety

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Report Highlights:

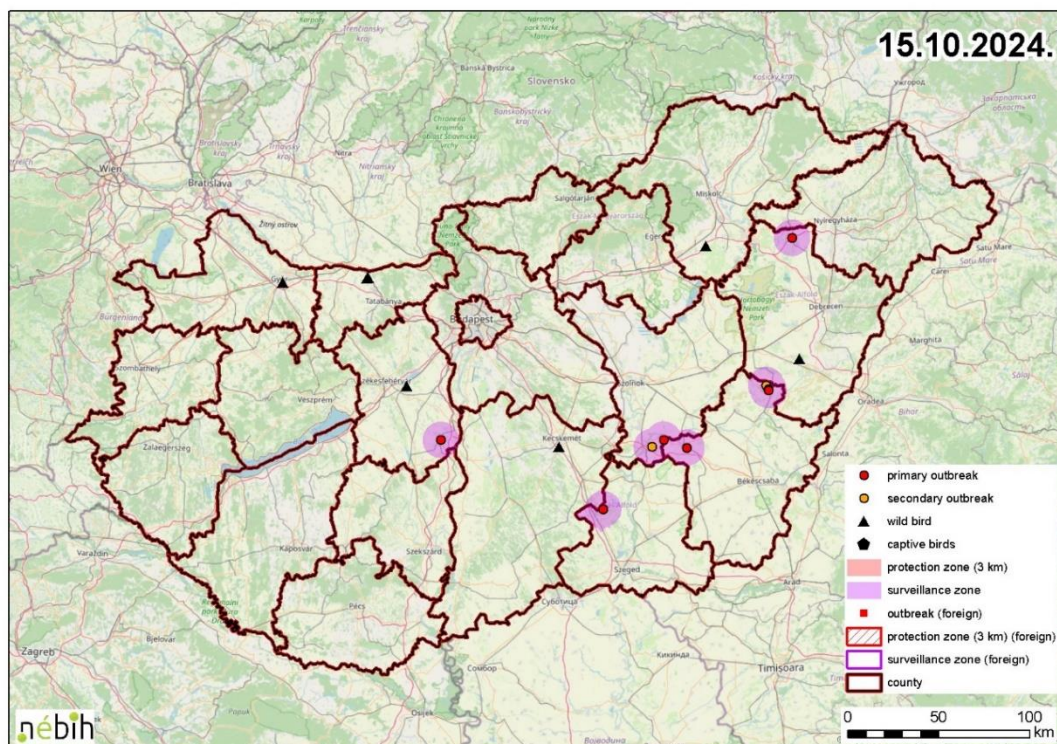
Although Hungary regained its avian influenza-free status on July 3, 2024, the disease has returned. In October 2024, animal health authorities confirmed primary outbreaks of the H5N1 strain of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in five counties. The epidemic is sweeping across Eastern Hungary and it also appeared in the Transdanubian region. Control and quarantine measures are in place, but further cases are expected around the affected localities and in the neighboring counties as they are along stopover spots of migratory birds.

In October 2024, animal health authorities confirmed primary outbreaks of the H5N1 strain of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in five counties, mostly in Eastern Hungary, including Békés, Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok, Csongrád-Csanád, Hajdú-Bihar, and Fejér counties:

- On **September 30, 2024**, HPAI symptoms (increased mortality, reduced feed and water intake) emerged at a duck operation in Füzesgyarmat (Békés County), where 25,000 birds were kept.
- On **October 3, 2024**, authorities detected primary HPAI infections at a foie-gras goose holding in Öcsöd (Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok County) with a population of 2,500 geese.
- On **October 11, 2024**, increased mortality and neurological symptoms were also observed at a duck farm of 9.500 waterfowl in Pusztaszer (Csongrád-Csanád County).
- On **October 14, 2024**, an HPAI primary outbreak was detected in Hajdú-Bihar County, in Hajdúnánás, at a mulard duck operation with 17,000 birds. The disease also appeared in the western part of the country, in Mezőfalva, at another duck farm in Fejér County where 23,570 waterfowl were kept.

The National Reference Laboratory confirmed the primary outbreaks and verified the presence of the H5N1 strain of HPAI at the mentioned operations. Control measures were immediately taken around the affected settlements with protection and surveillance zones established (Figure 1). Additionally, poultry farms have been ordered to keep their flocks indoors as of October 11, 2024, in the high-risk counties of Bács-Kiskun, Békés, Csongrád-Csanád, Győr-Moson-Sopron, Hajdú-Bihar, Komárom-Esztergom and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg.

Figure 1: HPAI outbreaks in Hungary, October 15, 2024.



(Source: National Food Chain Safety Office)

The most likely source of infection is migrating animals. Therefore, further cases are expected around the affected localities and neighboring counties as they are close to stopover spots for migratory birds or along the major migration routes across the country.

Consecutive HPAI outbreaks have challenged farmers for years, but Hungary's poultry sector has adjusted. The country's production is less impacted by the epidemic due to the quarantine measures applied and the fact that closed production systems are widely used particularly in the broiler industry. Stable domestic demand and capacity-increasing investments helped the sector. At the same time, 15 percent of poultry producers left the business in 2022. However, this departure of producers from the market was primarily caused by the concentration of the country's livestock and poultry industries. As ongoing developments and concentration help efficiency, a moderate rebound is expected in Hungary's chicken production in 2024 despite the recurrent infections of avian influenza. HPAI outbreaks and import bans on Hungarian poultry products – currently introduced by 23 non-EU countries – minimally affect chicken production because Hungarian exports are mainly destined for EU countries. These member states apply regionalization and the WOA's terrestrial animal health code, which allows exports from non-infected areas.

Attachments:

No Attachments.