

AEWA EUROPEAN GOOSE MANAGEMENT PLATFORM



**11th MEETING OF THE
AEWA EUROPEAN GOOSE MANAGEMENT
INTERNATIONAL WORKING GROUP**
16-18 June 2026, Skövde, Sweden



**HIGHLY PATHOGENIC AVIAN INFLUENZA CONTACT GROUP: UPDATES RELEVANT
TO THE EGMP DURING THE 2025/2026 WINTER SEASON**

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with contributions from the members of the HPAI Contact Group*

Summary:

This note provides a summary of the key issues discussed by the EGMP Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) Contact Group regarding the 2025/2026 winter season. It offers a concise overview of the main developments with potential to impact goose populations under the remit of EGMP.

Action requested from the EGM IWG:

Take note of the HPAI Contact Group update and provide recommendations, as appropriate.

Introduction

This note provides a summary of the key issues discussed by the EGMP Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) Contact Group on 18 March 2026 regarding the 2025/2026 winter season complemented by additional information obtained by the Contact Group up to 1 May 2026. It offers a concise overview of the main developments with potential to impact goose populations under the remit of EGMP. This note is not fully representative of the situation across all Range States; rather it is limited to those with current representation on the Contact Group.

Belgium

Several cases of HPAI were reported in poultry farms, with a spatial distribution that does not appear linked to wintering waterbirds. While gulls and buzzards have been affected, no significant outbreaks have been detected in natural wild bird populations. There is also no clear epidemiological association with Barnacle Geese, Greater White-fronted Geese or other relevant migratory species.

Denmark

Unusual outbreak pattern this season, with several outbreaks since October 2025. In March 2026, 5 new cases have been confirmed in a period of 10 days. Authorities in Copenhagen have been euthanizing sick swans for animal welfare reasons. Greylag Geese appear heavily affected, though precise mortality figures are unavailable. Thousands of pheasants have been impacted, and surveillance has expanded to include foxes after the virus was detected in a fox in December 2025.

Germany

According to the latest European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) assessment¹, the number of HPAI cases reported in wild birds this winter is three times higher than during the previous season. A particularly large outbreak has been documented in Common Cranes in Germany and France.

Netherlands

A new wave of avian influenza infections among wild birds that was looming after the summer of 2025, partly due to alarming reports from Germany, where large numbers of cranes were dying at the time, became clear in October. The first outbreak among poultry in the Netherlands was confirmed on October 6 in the municipality of Aa en Hunze in Drenthe. Ten days later, the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture (LVVN) imposed a nationwide mandatory confinement and shielding requirement for captive birds. Despite this, by the end of March, more than 40 poultry farms and 10 other locations with captive birds had become infected. The epicenter was in Gelderland and Limburg, but outbreaks also occurred in almost all other provinces. After January, the numbers decreased slightly.

The picture from the avian influenza monitoring programs among live and dead wild birds was consistent with these reports. The first positive results were recorded in October 2025. Notably, a relatively large proportion of these involved live and seemingly healthy mallards. Increased mortality during 2025/2026 was observed primarily among goose and swan species, but some scavengers and birds of prey were also affected. Of the dead birds tested for avian influenza between 1 October 2025 and 17 March 2026 by the Dutch Wildlife Health Centre (DWHC)

¹ EFSA Avian influenza overview December 2025–February 2026. Available at: <https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.2903/j.efsa.2026.10015>.

and Wageningen Bioveterinary Research (WBVR), 77% (79/103) of the Greylag Geese, 69% (27/39) of the buzzards, 69% (9/13) of the White-fronted Geese, 64% (18/28) of the Barnacle Geese, 60% (21/35) of the Canada Geese, 52% (32/62) of the Mute Swans and 40% (8/20) of the Herring Gulls tested positive. The virus was also detected in various other bird species. For example, a dead crane, three dead Eagle Owls and five dead peregrines tested positive. Estimating total mortality of geese remains difficult, though current indications suggest lower mortality compared with the 2021/2022 season, albeit with considerable uncertainty.²

United Kingdom

The United Kingdom reports a diminished sense of seasonality in HPAI patterns, with a sharp rise in detections in autumn and continued cases throughout winter. Significant detection and mortality have been observed in both resident and migratory geese and swans: Greylag Goose, Pink-footed Goose, Barnacle Goose, Canada Goose, Mute Swan and Whooper Swan. In the Svalbard (br) Barnacle Goose population, which overwinters on the Solway Firth, significant die-off began in early November. Total mortality was likely in the thousands, although precise estimates remain challenging. More than 400 carcasses were reported to NatureScot, and it is known that similar, if not greater, numbers of sick and dead birds were found on the English side of the Solway. In contrast, the E Greenland (br) Barnacle Goose population shows minimal impact this winter with no observed mortality and just one single positive detection.

² More information available at: <https://sovon.nl/actueel/nieuwsberichten/vogelgriep-op-zn-retour-dit-voorjaar>.

Annex I: Membership of the EGMP HPAI Contact Group as of May 2026

Table 1. Membership of the HPAI Contact Group as of May 2026.

Country / Organisation	Representative	Affiliation
Belgium	Floris Verhaeghe	Flemish Nature and Forest Agency
Ireland	Seán Kelly	National Parks & Wildlife Service
Latvia	Oskars Keišs	University of Latvia
Netherlands	Roy Slaterus	Sovon
Spain	Mencía Serrano Ruiz de Dulanto	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food of Spain
Sweden	Caroline Bröjer	National Veterinary Institute
United Kingdom	Jenny Park	Scottish Natural Heritage
Danish Hunting Association	Lene Mitdgaard	Senior Advisor
BirdLife	Willem Van Den Bossche	Senior Flyways Conservation Officer
WWT	Ruth Cromie	CMS Councillor for Wildlife Health
FACE	Cy Griffin	Senior Conservation Manager