# First confirmed case of bird flu in sheep reported in the UK



The first confirmed case of bird flu in sheep in the UK has been reported, prompting a series of responses from authorities aimed at managing the situation. The Chief Veterinary Officer for the UK affirmed that the case involved a single sheep on a farm located in Yorkshire, where bird flu had previously been detected in captive birds.

The identification of the infected sheep was made during routine testing, with follow-up tests on milk revealing the presence of the avian influenza virus, specifically the H5N1 strain. Following confirmation, the infected animal was humanely culled, and extensive testing was conducted on the remaining flock. Reports indicate that no additional infections were detected thereafter.

A government spokesperson stated, "There is no evidence to suggest an increased risk to the nation's livestock population," reinforcing the notion that while this incident marks a notable occurrence, the wider implications appear to be limited.

Despite the reassurance concerning the overall risk to livestock, the UK's Chief Veterinary Officer, Christine Middlemiss, has encouraged all livestock keepers to adopt a vigilant approach in monitoring their animals for any clinical signs of avian influenza. She stated, “Strict biosecurity measures have been implemented to prevent the further spread of disease. While the risk to livestock remains low, I urge all animal owners to ensure scrupulous cleanliness is in place and to report any signs of infection to the Animal Plant Health Agency immediately.”

In light of this incident, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has initiated surveillance measures on the affected premises. This is part of a broader effort to mitigate concerns stemming from recent outbreaks of avian influenza, including a notable outbreak among dairy cows reported in the United States.

The case will be reported to international health authorities, including the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) and the World Health Organisation (WHO), in compliance with UK’s international reporting requirements.

Dr Meera Chand from the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) noted that while avian influenza is primarily a disease affecting birds, the potential for transmission to mammals, including sheep, is recognised, but remains rare. She affirmed that the general public’s risk from avian flu remains low, further stating, “Current evidence suggests that the avian influenza viruses we’re seeing circulating around the world do not spread easily to people."

The Food Standards Agency has also weighed in on the situation, providing assurances regarding food safety. They maintain that properly cooked poultry and poultry products, including eggs, are safe for consumption. Robin May, Chief Scientific Adviser at the FSA, stated, “Our advice remains that bird flu poses a very low food safety risk to UK consumers since the H5N1 virus is not normally transmitted through food.”

As surveillance and testing continue in the affected area, authorities remain prepared to adjust their public health responses as new information becomes available, ensuring that both animal and public health are prioritised in the unfolding situation.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.itv.com/news/2025-03-24/government-confirms-uk-has-found-first-case-of-bird-flu-transmission-to-sheep> - This article confirms the first recorded case of bird flu transmission to a sheep in England and highlights the measures taken by authorities to manage the situation. It also discusses public health risks and surveillance efforts.
* <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2025/03/24/bird-flu-detected-in-british-sheep-for-the-first-time/> - The Telegraph report details the detection of bird flu in a British sheep for the first time, emphasizing the single case in Yorkshire and the lack of increased risk to national livestock.
* <https://news.sky.com/story/bird-flu-detected-in-sheep-in-england-for-the-first-time-13334862> - This Sky News article provides additional details on the first recorded case of bird flu in sheep in England, including the location in Yorkshire and the absence of further infections in the flock.
* <https://www.worldanimalhealth.info/en/home.html> - The World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) is an international body that would receive reports of significant animal health incidents like this first case of bird flu in sheep, as part of global health reporting requirements.
* <https://www.who.int/health-topics/influenza#tab=tab_1> - The World Health Organisation (WHO) provides information on influenza, including avian flu, and would be informed about such cases in compliance with international health reporting obligations.
* <https://www.food.gov.uk/news-alerts/food-safety-prioritised> - The UK's Food Standards Agency website often addresses food safety concerns, including those related to bird flu, similar to the assurances given that properly cooked poultry and products are safe for consumption.
* <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c3w1jj0jzl2o> - Please view link - unable to able to access data