

UK Detection of HPAI H5N1 in milk of a kept sheep (24/03/2025)

After identifying a small herd of sheep in close contact with infected captive birds at a previously confirmed non-commercial HPAI-infected premises, precautionary testing of the sheep was conducted on March 10th. Ten sheep were sampled that day (the others couldn't be sampled due to welfare reasons), with one showing a positive serology result. Resampling on March 17th showed the same serology result, and the milk sample tested positive for H5 viral RNA by PCR. The sheep was culled on March 19th, and extensive testing showed negative PCR results in tissues, organs and swabs, but the milk and blood remained positive. The ewe had a short history of mastitis, and her lambs tested negative on accredited tests. The infection likely originated from contamination in the udder. All other sheep in the holding tested negative on March 22nd, 2025.

All parts of the affected sheep were safely disposed of without entering the food chain. No milk from the animal or the wider flock enters the food chain, and milk was only present due to recent lambing.