

SEFARI Gateway special advisory group project:

Scoping requirements for avian influenza surveillance and testing for wild birds in Scotland

Core Team: Eleanor Watson (MRI/EPIC), Mara Rocchi (MRI), George Russell (MRI/EPIC), Anna Meredith (UoE), Emma Cunningham (UoE), Paul Digard (UoE/FluMap), Rute Pinto (UoE/FluMap), Iain McKendrick (BioSS/EPIC), Giles Innocent (BioSS/EPIC), John Allan (NatureScot).

MRI: Moredun Research Institute, EPIC: Centre of Expertise on Animal Disease Outbreaks, UoE: University of Edinburgh, BioSS: Biomathematics and Statistics Scotland

Duration: Jan – March 2023.

Contact: eleanor.watson@moredun.ac.uk

Knowledge Gap

The ongoing avian influenza H5N1 crisis has had a devastating effect on wild bird species in Scotland, with significant losses to sea bird populations. NatureScot have identified the need for increased capacity for wild bird testing for both passive and active surveillance to fully identify the scale of the problem in specific populations and environments relevant to Scotland, and to support decision making to reduce the spread and impact of this disease.



Project Scope

The costs, infrastructure, biosafety measures and expertise required for this are considerable and rely on input from a number of groups. This includes decision makers for prioritising collection of samples, wardens for passive surveillance, trained volunteers and engaged members of the research community for active surveillance and other opportunistic sampling, laboratory managers to oversee robust testing that complies with health and safety legislation, and data experts to ensure data is collected and managed appropriately and disseminated effectively.

Deliverables

- Scope out anticipated testing requirements (short and long term), and establish additional capacity required for testing.
- Prepare guidance for field sampling and information on licencing requirements to enable field teams to collect and transport samples safely and effectively.
- Review laboratory procedures, protocols and legislative requirements.
- Outline required laboratory data resource management, data accessibility and infrastructure.
- Identify current capacity and how it is best utilised, and provide recommendations for generating an effective and responsive network.
- Provide detailed information that will allow NatureScot to assess the resource that is required to set up additional testing alongside relevant advice and information.