


UPDATE ON EQUINE INFLUENZA OUTBREAKS DETECTED IN THE UK APRIL-MAY 2026

EIDS UPDATE: 22/05/2026

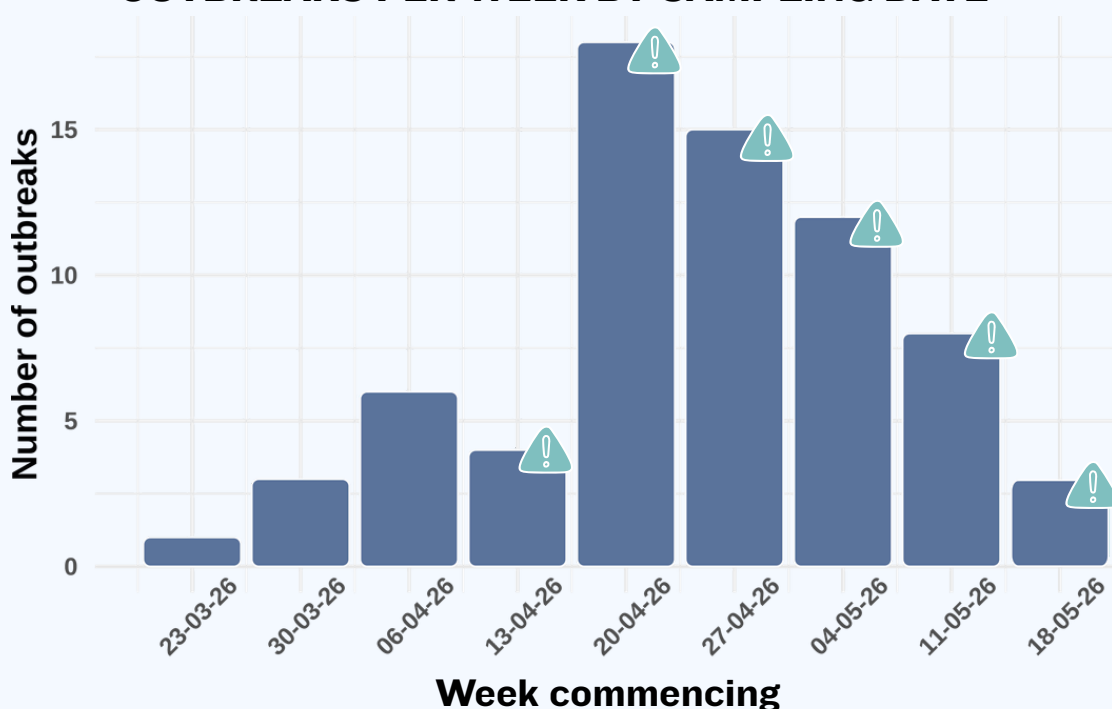
EIDS continue to receive notifications of equine influenza (EI) outbreaks from across the UK, and we thank veterinary practitioners for their ongoing support with case reporting and submission of outbreak information. Since the beginning of April 2026, **a total of 70 laboratory-confirmed EI outbreaks have been identified across 36 counties.**

EIDS is aware of a further 19 confirmed EI outbreaks that are not included in this report because outbreak details and/or permission for anonymous reporting have not been provided or granted .

Although weekly reported outbreak numbers based on sampling date appear to be declining, **continued vigilance is essential, as a similar pattern was observed in 2019 before a subsequent surge and peak in outbreaks.**


Only continued monitoring, testing and reporting will allow accurate tracking of the outbreak and **maintain an up-to-date picture of national disease activity.**


OUTBREAKS PER WEEK BY SAMPLING DATE




The sampling date reflects when horses showed clinical signs, prompting veterinary investigation and sample collection, and may therefore differ from the date the outbreak was reported to by EIDS

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

 Since the previous update issued on 14/05/2026, EIDS has received reporting approval for a further nine confirmed outbreaks across eight counties

 One of these counties had not previously reported EI during the current outbreak period, indicating continued geographic spread

 Recent horse movement continues to be a key epidemiological feature of reported outbreaks



EIDS continues to **encourage reporting of confirmed EI outbreaks** and permission to share anonymised county-level data.

Free laboratory testing for suspected cases is available through the Horserace Betting Levy Board (HBLB) flu surveillance scheme, run by EIDS in conjunction with Rossdales Laboratories.

This scheme also **enables epidemiological and virological information to be obtained** which is vital to ensure preventive measures such as vaccination are optimally used.

Veterinary practices can enrol here:

www.equinesurveillance.org/flu enrol



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Our map below reflects all outbreaks reported to EIDS between 29/03 - 21/05. Lighter shaded regions are previously reported outbreaks, darker regions are newly reported outbreaks in this update.

CURRENT OVERVIEW:


 Newly reported outbreaks  Previously reported outbreaks

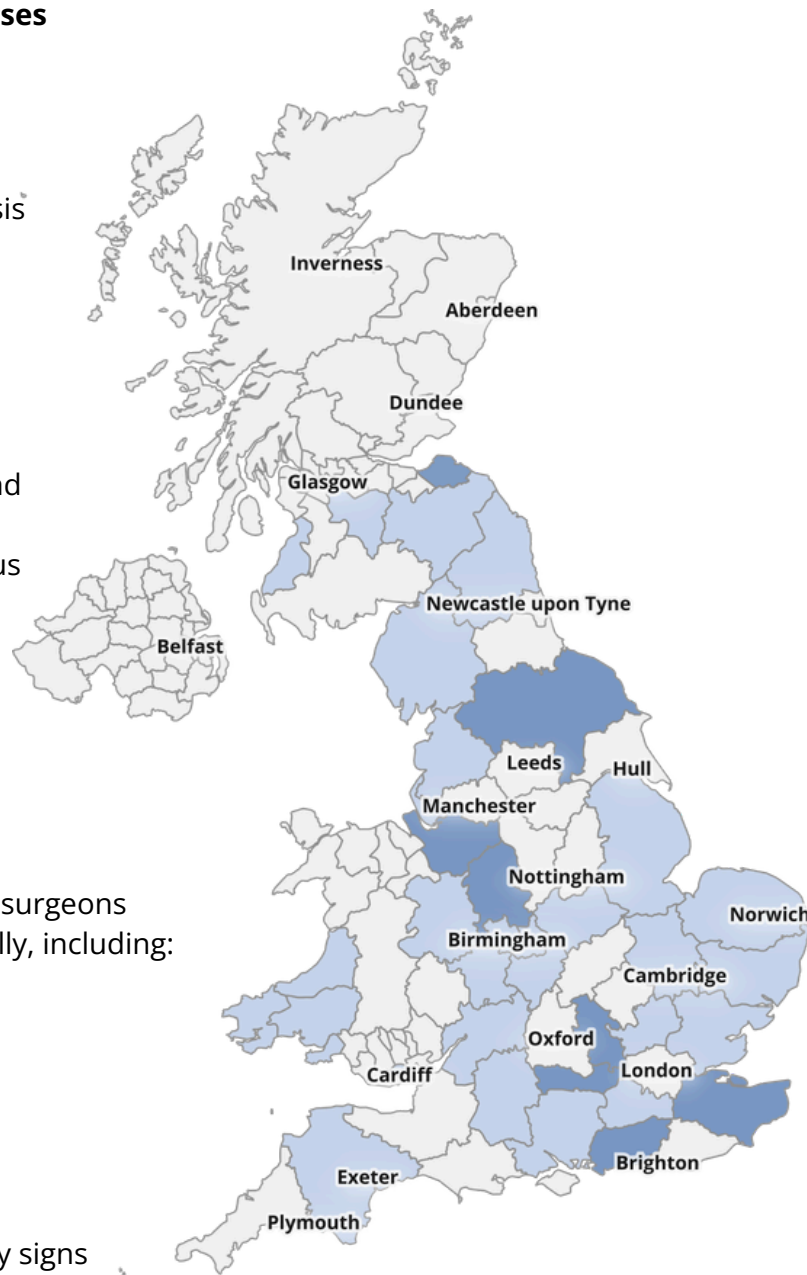
Of the 70 confirmed outbreaks, **42 (60%) involved horses that had a recent history of travel**. These findings continue to support the role of horse movement in facilitating spread between premises and regions

 EI should however remain a differential diagnosis even where no recent movement history exists

VACCINATION STATUS:


- 7/70 reported as vaccinated
- 43/70 reported as unvaccinated
- 2/70 reported as mixed vaccinated and unvaccinated horses
- 18/70 with unknown vaccination status


 10/70 outbreaks have been confirmed using rapid in-house point-of-care test (LAMP and iiPCR)





EIDS ADVICE

Horse owners, trainers, yard managers and veterinary surgeons are encouraged to review biosecurity measures carefully, including:

 ensuring vaccinations are up to date

 isolating new arrivals appropriately

 monitoring horses closely for early respiratory signs

 considering movement risks during periods of increased EI activity

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SAMPLING DATE VS REPORTING DATE

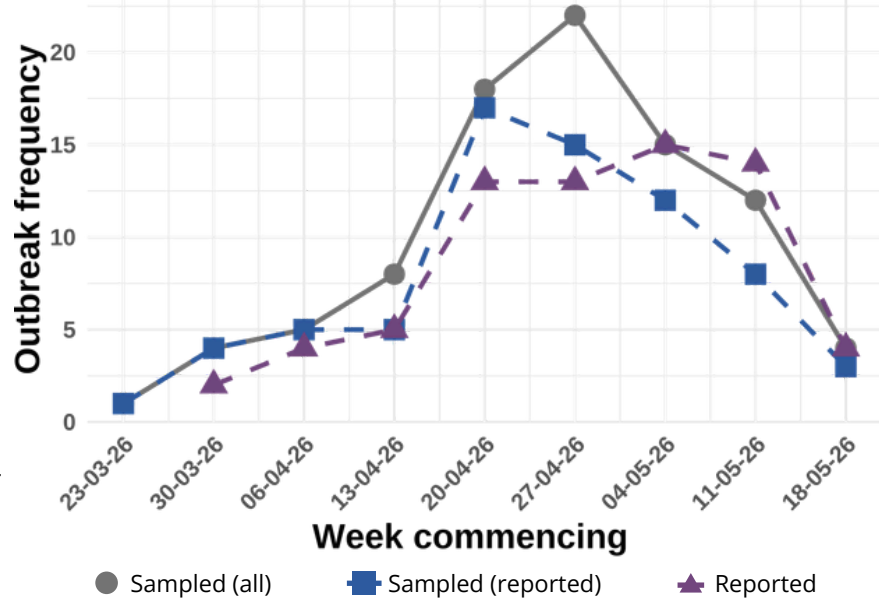
22/05/2026

EIDS ADVISES OWNERS AND YARDS TO REMAIN EXTREMELY VIGILANT

The graph illustrates the progression of lab-confirmed infected premises (outbreaks) over time since the initial positive sample (week commencing 23 March 2026). The data are broken down into three distinct metrics: total sampled premises testing positive (n= 89), outbreaks by their reporting date (n= 70), and reported outbreaks plotted by their sampling date (n= 70).

Plotting these data reveals a distinct, yet expected, lag in reporting. Crucially, this reporting lag, compounded by instances of non-reporting, artificially flattened the true peak of the outbreak.

While the genuine epidemiological peak has seemingly occurred during week commencing 20 April for reported samples and week commencing 27 April for all samples, the reporting timeline (shown on the ICC and EquiFluNet) obscure the true scale of this due to a lag between veterinary surgeons sampling horses and subsequently reporting outbreaks/cases to EIDS.



Although weekly reported outbreak numbers based on sampling date currently appear to be declining, **continued vigilance is essential, as a similar pattern was observed in 2019 before a subsequent surge and peak in outbreaks**; only continued monitoring, testing, and reporting will allow accurate tracking of the outbreak and maintain an up-to-date picture of national disease activity.

EI VIRUS SEQUENCING

Sequencing completed via the HBLB funded Equine Virology team indicates that the virus currently circulating in the UK is closely related to a strain identified in the United States in 2024-25, which was subsequently detected in Japan in 2025 and Europe in 2026 before appearing in the UK in 2026.

This pattern supports stepwise geographical spread, driven by international horse movement, and emphasises the value of molecular surveillance in understanding virus evolution and dissemination. Haemagglutination inhibition assays using virus-specific ferret antisera showed that antibody titres against these new viruses were comparable to those against viruses circulating in the UK during 2024–2025.

