

Estonia

VACCINATION PROGRAM FOR VACCINATION OF BIRDS KEPT IN TALLINN ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS AGAINST AVIAN INFLUENZA SUBMITTED BY ESTONIA FOR APPROVAL BY THE COMMISSION

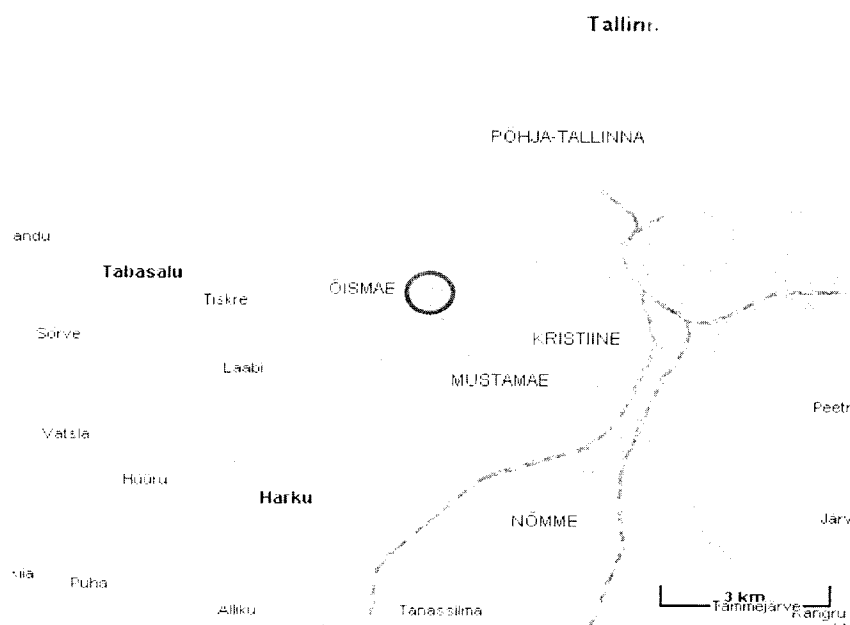
1. Introduction

In accordance with the Commission decision 2005/744/EC of the 21 October 2005, the vaccination of birds kept in Tallinn Zoological Gardens against avian influenza is planned for the coming weeks. Therefore, Estonia introduces this vaccination programme to the Commission for approval.

The recent spread of highly pathogenic avian influenza H5N1 virus to the European Union suggests that all Member States are at risk of detecting avian influenza virus. Therefore, all means that are required should be implemented so as to reduce as much as possible the risks of an introduction of avian influenza in bird populations in European Union.

The migratory flyways of wild birds are considered to play role in the spreading of the avian influenza virus and poses the risk of detecting avian influenza virus at the territory of Estonia during this spring migration season. According to the preliminary risk assessment migratory flyways of certain waterfowl and ashore bird species lay nearby the territory of Estonia. The recent finding of avian influenza H5N1 virus in wild birds in the Baltic sea region requires taking all the necessary measures to prevent the virus spreading to poultry and other captive birds.

Tallinn Zoological Gardens is situated in proximity to the Baltic sea coast, lakes, swamps and pond where migratory birds can gather. Therefore, it is considered being in a risk of a possible introduction of avian influenza virus.



Picture 1. Location of the Tallinn Zoological Gardens

The main way to avoid the introduction of avian influenza virus is implementation of biosecurity measures. All possible steps are taken to isolate the zoo birds from wild birds (keeping indoors or covering cages, feeding indoors). Waterfowl and water bird species can not for practical and welfare reasons be kept indoors, they are kept in outdoor facilities with an open pond area. Therefore, it would be reasonable to use vaccination as a complimentary preventative measure in conjunction with strict biosecurity measures and laboratory testing in these birds.

The vaccination of zoo birds during the outbreaks in the Netherlands in 2003 has showed that this is an appropriate measure to help reducing the number of infected birds. Vaccination also reduces the amount of virus shed in case when vaccinated birds still become infected, this in it's turn helps to reduce the overall virus spreading.

2. Zoo and susceptible birds covered by the vaccination programme

There is one zoo in Estonia in the capital city, Tallinn.

The address: Tallinn Zoological Gardens, Paldiski mnt. 145, Tallinn 13522 Estonia.

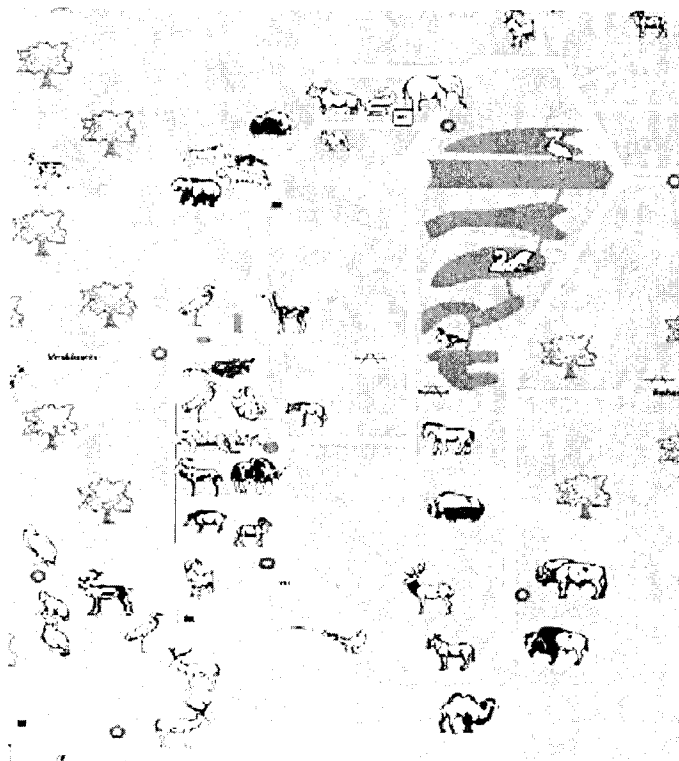
There are 537 birds in total kept in the zoo.

The species and number of waterfowl and water birds to be vaccinated:

22 swans, 128 ducks, 153 geese (*Anseriformes*) and 9 pelicans (*Pelicanidae*).

In total: 312.

The waterfowl and pelicans are kept in an open pond area in the part of the zoo situated separately from the areas where other birds are kept. All the other birds are kept indoors or in cages covered by net.



Picture 2. Location of animals at Tallinn Zoological Gardens

3. Vaccine to be used

The vaccine to be used in the vaccination campaign is: NOBILIS® INFLUENZA H5N2, Intervet. It is an inactivated vaccine that complies with the DIVA principle as it has a different N-antigen than those of the wild birds' virus. Some research has been done on the effect of the vaccine immunologic response in waterfowl, particularly in ducks. No side effects in birds have been reported so far.

The permission for the vaccine is given by the State Agency of Medicines of Estonia. The vaccine will be distributed and the unused amount of the vaccine will be collected by the Veterinary and Food Board.

4. Vaccination procedure

The vaccine will be used in accordance with the instructions of the manufacturer. Revaccination will be done after 6 weeks from the first vaccination.

Vaccination will be carried out by the zoo veterinarians in a possibly shorter period of time (not exceeding 96 hours) under the supervision of the state veterinary inspector.

The veterinary inspector also controls prevention measures that are taken to ensure that vaccinated birds are separated from the rest zoo birds and all possible steps are taken to reduce risk of contact with wild birds.

Vaccinated birds will be individually identifiable by microchips or by wearproof rings.

A list with the detailed description of the vaccinated bird species (with Latin names), number of each species and individual identifications will be compiled and kept for at least 10 years. This list including the doses of vaccine used for each species and possible side-effects shall be submitted to the Veterinary and Food Board as well as the unused vaccine left.

5. Laboratory testing

Blood samples will be taken from the 10 % of birds to be vaccinated before the vaccination, 30 days after and at least once during 6 months after the completion of vaccination.

The blood samples will be tested for avian influenza at the Veterinary and Food Laboratory, Tallinn division, Väike-Paala 3, Tallinn 11415 Estonia. The test results will be kept by the laboratory at least 10 years.

6. Movement and trade restrictions

The vaccinated birds will not be moved to other facilities in Estonia unless authorised by the Veterinary and Food Board.

Trade and movement to another Member State will be permitted only after such movement is authorized by the Member State authority of destination.

Under no circumstances no products from the vaccinated birds will get into the food chain.

7. Reporting

A detailed report on the vaccination programme including laboratory test results will be submitted to the Commission and the Member States in the framework of the Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health.