1. Review of the situation of Avian Influenza in Asia, Russia and Turkey and the suspicion in Romania

Romania

The Commission informed the Committee that in the evening of Friday 7 October, the Romanian Authorities reported to the Commission a suspicion of Avian Influenza (AI) in the Danube Delta region. Samples have been taken from 3 ducks and 2 chickens; however these tests have not given positive results so far. The Romanian delegate explained that further to these findings strong actions have been undertaken, including the stamping-out of all poultry in the farm in which the ducks died and in several other backyard farms in the surrounding, rigorous controls at the border of the restricted zone established around the suspected farm and disinfection. Moreover, the Romanian Authorities decided to ban hunting in the Danube Delta region.

A Community expert team arrived on 10 October in Romania in order to examine the situation on the spot. The European Commission concluded that it will review the situation once the test results are received and will act immediately in accordance with the results.

In the meantime, two MSs have imposed import restrictions for poultry products from Romania. The Commission reminded those MSs that they are not acting in compliance with Community legislation and therefore formally requested them to immediately withdraw these measures.

The Commission also informed the Committee that it is sending an additional request for advice on the risk posed by migratory birds to EFSA.

Distribution of:

- “Immediate notification report to the OIE of 10 October 2005 from Turkey concerning the outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza”

- “OIE alert message concerning the high mortality observed in wild birds in Iran”
The Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health distributed the following results:

“The Committee thanked the Commission for the work done since Friday last, in particular providing to all Member States, Bulgaria and Romania the information in a timely manner on the recent suspicions of avian influenza.

**Romania:**
The Committee received up to date information in relation to the situation in Romania from the Romanian delegation and from the preliminary report of the Commission expert team being at present evaluating the situation on the spot. They took note of the tentative conclusion of the ‘Mission to Romania concerning a suspicion of avian influenza involving EU experts and experts from Romanian veterinary authorities’, which states in particular that ‘The disease situation amongst poultry and wild birds in the County of Tulcea, the available epidemiological data and the laboratory results do at present not confirm the presence of avian influenza. The reaction by the Romanian authorities on the positive serological results based on samples obtained in poultry in Ceamurlia de Jos shows an alert veterinary administration which immediately took measures to avoid spread of disease’.

**Turkey:**
The Committee thanked the Commission for the prompt Decision taken on Monday to suspend import of poultry products and pet birds from Turkey.

The Committee received the information transmitted by the Turkish authorities and acknowledged the fact that samples have been sent to the Community Reference Laboratory for further typing, and adopted the proposal of the Commission to prolong the safeguard measures for Turkey.”


Not discussed.

3. Exchange of views and possible opinion of the Committee on a draft Commission Decision on the evolution of animal diseases in the Community and in third countries.

Not discussed.

4. Exchange of views and possible opinion of the Committee on a draft Commission Decision concerning certain protection measures in relation to a suspicion of highly pathogenic avian influenza in Turkey and repealing Decision 2005/705/EC. (SANCO/10500/2005 Rev.1)

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1 EU experts: J. Waestergaard, G. Koch and R. Manvell. Romanian experts: N. Lazar, S. Nicolae and M. Avran
The Commission explained that the presence of avian influenza virus H5 in Turkey was confirmed over the weekend in an open-air turkey farm in the region of Balikesir, in the north-western part of Anatolia. In the farms, very high mortality of birds has been reported. The Commission explained that samples have been sent to the CRL, Weybridge. The exact strain is not yet known but will probably be available on 14 October. However, in view of the positive results of the first laboratory tests for the isolation of avian influenza virus, the European Commission adopted a decision on 10 October 2005 by emergency procedure to ban all imports of live birds and feathers from Turkey. The purpose of the presented Decision is to prolong the safeguard measures for Turkey until 30 April 2006.

Vote: Unanimously in favour.

5. Exchange of views and possible opinion of the Committee on a draft Commission Decision on introducing supplement measures to control infections with low pathogenic avian influenza in Italy and repealing Decision 2004/666/EC. (SANCO/10395/2005/Rev.1) (see point 30 of SCFCAH of 13-14 September 2005 and point 23 of SCFCAH of 5 October 2005)

The Commission explained that it has taken into account the proposals that were made by the MSs.

Vote: Qualified majority in favour.


The Commission explained that the outbreak in the Republic of South Africa has been contained and that the disease is no longer present in the country. The protection measures in respect of the Republic of South Africa are therefore no longer necessary.

Vote: Unanimously in favour.


The Commission informed the Committee that an outbreak of FMD has been confirmed by the Brazilian authorities and reported to the OIE on 10 October 2005 in Brazil in the State of Mato Grosso do Sul close to the border to Parana. The purpose of this draft Decision is to ensure the high health status of the Community with regard to FMD by suspending imports of bovine meat from Mato Grosso do Sul and Parana.

It was agreed that meat from animals slaughtered before 30 September would be accepted as this corresponded to the date of suspension of freedom of FMD with vaccination by the OIE of certain States in Brazil.
Vote: Qualified majority in favour.

**Miscellaneous**

The Commission distributed a letter from the Swiss Authorities concerning a ban on import from Israel, Romania and Turkey of birds, poultry meat, wildfowl, hatching eggs and raw feathers.

AU – The Austrian delegate reported that poultry meat from Romania destined for Switzerland stays at the Austrian border. The Commission will therefore get into contact with the Swiss Authorities.

BU – The Bulgarian delegate stated that following the suspicion of an AI outbreak in Romania border inspections have been enforced. Furthermore, a ban on hunting of wild birds is in force. However, until now there are no signs of an outbreak of AI in Bulgaria. The Commission asked the Bulgarian delegation to check whether laboratories in Bulgaria would need support e.g. reagents.
N.B. The proposals on which the Committee expressed an opinion are subject to a defined procedure in relation to the formal adoption by the Commission. Mission reports are available on the Internet at the following address: http://europa.eu.int/comm/food/fs/inspections/vi/reports/index_en.html

Bernard Van Goethem
Acting Director