All the Member States were present, except Austria, Slovakia and Lithuania were absent for points 7b and 7c but delegated their vote.

1. **Information on a suspicion of Newcastle Disease in Denmark**

The Danish delegate informed the Committee on a suspicion of Newcastle disease in a farm in *Broager, Southern Jutland*. On 19 October the animals showed neurological signs that lead to a suspicion of Newcastle Disease. Following the confirmation of high pathogenic PMV-1, culling was initiated. In accordance with European Union legislation, a 3-km-radius protection zone and a 10-km-radius surveillance zone have been established around the infected farm.

2. **Review of the Avian Influenza situation in Asia, Turkey, Romania and Russia and the suspicion in Greece.**

The Commission’s representative outlined the sequence of events since the SCFCAH of 20 October as regards the avian influenza situation. On 21 October the Commission received information from Croatia that the H5 virus was found in a dead swan on a fish farm in the municipality of *Nasice*. Following this information, the Commission adopted on 24 October at its own initiative a Decision which suspends imports of live poultry, ratites, farmed and wild feathered game birds, live birds other than poultry and hatching eggs of wild species from Croatia. Samples have been sent to the CRL in Weybridge and the Commission will inform the Member States once results are available. The Commission also distributed a “*Preliminary report on measures undertaken in order to control and prevent the spread of avian influenza in Croatia*” that was sent by the Croatian Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Water Management to the Commission.

Furthermore, the Commission and the UK delegate informed the Committee that on 21 October HPAI H5N1 was identified in an import quarantine unit in *Essex*. The source of the infection is similar to a virus isolated from ducks in China early this year. The UK delegation stated that further test are being carried out on dead and culled birds and that release from all UK quarantines is stopped. It was stressed that the UK should still be considered as free from HPAI.

As regards AI in Romania, the Commission distributed “*Romania AI Mission October 10-13, 2005*”
3. Information from Member States on procedures as outlined in Fax N. 21 of 19 October 2005 (ref. E2/BVG (05) D/521927)

Some Member States reported that National Reference laboratories are facing an unreasonable increase of the submission of samples which creates a risk that suspect samples can not rapidly be tested.

The Commission stressed that Member States should make sure that the National Reference laboratories report their results directly to the Chief Veterinary Offices. Furthermore, the Commission announced that it has organised a meeting concerning laboratories procedures for 4 November and requested Member States to supply information as regards the functioning of national laboratories.

See also the statement below.

4. Possibly, information on national measures being undertaken to ensure implementation of Decision 2005/734/EC, as amended by Decision SANCO/10524/2005/Rev.3.

Several Member States reported that they have started identifying high risk areas in compliance with Decision 2005/734/EC. Some of them have already enforced a ban on keeping poultry outdoors affecting parts of or the entire territory. The Committee agreed that implementation of bio security measures will be further discussed during the next SCFCAH.


Several Member States supported the Commission’s approach concerning a risk based approach as regards hunting.

See also the statement below.

6. Information on the missions carried out to Turkey, Bulgaria and Greece.

The Commission circulated the mission reports for Turkey and Bulgaria. National measures were increased in Bulgaria and the Commission made a number of recommendations in terms of disease surveillance and in case of an outbreak. The FVO mission to Greece finished on 22 October. The information that the Commission has received from Greece is reassuring, however, the results from the samples that were sent to the Community Reference laboratory are still pending.

7. 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.

The Commission explained that it adopted Decision 2005/749/EC of 24 October concerning certain protection measures in relation to a suspicion of highly pathogenic avian influenza in Croatia. The Commission decision was endorsed by the Member States at today’s SCFCAH.

**Vote:** Qualified majority in favour. 29 votes against

b) The Commission presented a “Draft Commission decision concerning certain protection measures in relation to highly pathogenic avian influenza in certain third countries for the import of certain captive birds” (SANCO/10541/2005/Rev.3)

Following the detection of highly pathogenic avian influenza in a bird held in quarantine in the UK, the Commission proposed to ban imports from third countries of captive live birds other than poultry for commercial purposes. Certain derogations from the ban are provided within this decision. Birds will be allowed to be moved between approved zoos and similar institutions. Hatching eggs of non-poultry birds can be imported for use in authorised hatcheries if their shells are decontaminated upon arrival, or if they are being sent to zoos. The decision will apply until 30 November 2005 and the SCFCAH will review the situation before.

**Vote:** Unanimously in favour. Austria absent but represented by Germany, Slovakia absent but represented by Slovenia, Lithuania absent but represented by Latvia

c) The Commission presented a “Draft Commission decision concerning certain protection measures in relation to highly pathogenic avian influenza in certain third countries and the movement of birds accompanying their owners” (SANCO/10544/2005/Rev.4)

The intention of this draft decision is to suspend movement of birds accompanying their owners from certain areas at risk. Member States can allow no more than five birds accompanying their owners to enter from third countries on condition that they have undergone a 30-day quarantine in approved third countries, otherwise they must be subject to 30 days quarantine in the Member State of destination. As an alternative to quarantine, such birds may be admitted if they have been vaccinated against avian influenza, or have tested negative for avian influenza during a ten day isolation period before movement. The movement of birds accompanying their owners is not restricted for Norway, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Andorra, Iceland, Greenland, Faeroe Islands and San Marino. The decision will apply until 30 November 2005 and the SCFCAH will review the situation before.

**Vote:** Unanimously in favour. Austria absent but represented by Germany, Slovakia absent but represented by Slovenia, Lithuania absent but represented by Latvia
The Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health made the following statement:

“Disease situation

The Standing Committee has today examined the situation in relation to Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) strain H5N1, with regard to recent developments.

The Standing Committee insists once again that clear distinction must be made between Avian influenza (“the bird flu”) that occurs in South-East Asia and has been recently detected in poultry in Turkey, Romania and Russia, Avian influenza sporadically affecting humans, normal seasonal human influenza, and the possible risk of an influenza pandemic.

The committee agreed on two Decisions temporarily suspending the importation of captive birds and the movements from third countries of live birds accompanying their owner (pet birds), although certain derogations are allowed. An additional decision to ban imports of live poultry, live birds, wild feathered game meat and unprocessed feathers from Croatia was also agreed in view of recent events.

In the EU no outbreak of Avian influenza has been confirmed

Consumers protection

The Standing Committee also considers that:

- All human cases of infection due to Avian influenza H5N1 have occurred in South-East Asia. The transmission of the bird flu virus to humans is a very rare event: in the last two years 121 human cases have been confirmed in a geographical area with a population of more than 1 billion people, despite the very large spread of disease in poultry farms, where it has become endemic.

- All the available information shows that direct contact between infected poultry and humans is the main cause of disease transmission to humans in South-East Asia. Food has been suspected to be the origin of the infection only on few occasions and this was linked to very unhygienic practices, such as drinking raw blood of ducks that were slaughtered at home, without any veterinary meat inspection.

- In case the virus enters the EU, immediate actions would be taken to control the disease including killing and destruction of all infected or suspected poultry and in that way the source of infection will be eliminated.

- In the EU, veterinary controls at slaughter and the flow of information through the food chain protect EU consumers. Only poultry meat fit for human consumption is allowed on the EU market. In addition, imports of poultry products such as eggs and meat from the affected areas are banned for animal health reasons. These import measures are continuously updated to ensure that poultry products on sale in the EU do not pose a risk for consumers.

- Properly cooked poultry or eggs have not been proved to be a source of infection.

Therefore EU consumers can be reassured about any possible risk related to the consumption of poultry meat or other products from poultry.

Surveillance and laboratory testing

At present, there is the tendency in the media and consequently in the general public to infer that any deaths of bird, domestic or wild, in the Community may be due to avian influenza. Unfortunately, this is leading to an unreasonable increase of the submission of samples to the diagnostic laboratories for testing for avian influenza, and in particular to National Reference laboratories. This situation may lead to an overload of the work of the laboratories, that may be detrimental to the rapid testing of those samples from birds or poultry for which there are good grounds for avian influenza suspicion.
Therefore, while the Member States are currently strengthening their surveillance and laboratory capabilities, the submission of samples to the laboratories (birds found dead) will take into account all the relevant epidemiological information such as the level of geographical risk (wetlands), symptoms (sick or increased dead animals observed) or species involved (waterfowl are the category of birds at higher risk). This approach should ensure an optimised use of human and technical resources. Co-operation and networking between the EU Community Reference Laboratory and National Reference laboratories is also being strengthened.

**Hunting**

The Committee reiterated its statement of 21 October regarding hunting. In the event of the detection of H5N1 virus in wild birds in the Community, a risk based approach should be followed as regards restrictions and the possible impact of hunting activities at local level.”

**Miscellaneous**

The Commission’s representative informed the Committee on a conference jointly organised by the European Commission and the Regional Office for Europe of the WHO in *Copenhagen (Denmark)* on 24-26 October. European health experts discussed the state of play of preparations for a possible flu pandemic. As regards avian influenza, discussions focused on improving surveillance and information sharing, on compensation of farmers, on protection of poultry sector workers and on detection of AI in humans. On influenza pandemic preparedness, the experts called for the strengthening of aspects other than pharmaceutical interventions in national plans, such as civil protection, transport, communications and health systems response, setting up emergency centres, investing in labs, and encouraging vaccination between pandemics.

F- The French delegation distributed and reported “Maladie de Newcastle en France”. The disease was confirmed on 21 October. The affected establishment in Pas-de-Calais has been blocked, sanitary measures to control the disease are in place and in the surveillance zone, transport of animals and exhibitions are prohibited.
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

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