1. Information on the avian influenza situation

No new information available to date.

2. Information and exchange of views on two draft Decisions concerning

- certain interim protection measures in relation to a suspicion of highly pathogenic avian influenza in wild birds (SANCO/10561/2005 – Rev. 4)
- certain interim protection measures in relation to a suspicion of an outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza in poultry (SANCO/10558/2005 – Rev.4)

The Commission explained that the purpose of both the draft Decisions presented was to allow a prompt reaction in relation to a suspicion of an outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza (H5N1) in wild birds or in poultry in the Community, by laying down interim protection measures. These Decisions could be taken by the Commission on its own initiative and then, according to the rules of procedure, would have to be endorsed by the Committee within 10 days.

The Member States were invited to express their views as regards these preliminary draft Decisions. A broad discussion took place and the Commission noted the numerous Member States’ comments.
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

No items were raised.


The Commission outlined the amendments made to the draft Decision taking on board certain comments made by the Member States at the last Committee meeting.

The draft Decision intends to prolong, until 31 January 2006, the suspension of movement of pet birds and of imports of other birds from certain areas at risk in relation to highly pathogenic avian influenza. The draft Decision also aims at allowing imports of guano considering that in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 1774/2002 this product is not subject to any animal health conditions.

Germany issued the following declaration and was joined by Spain:

“Deutschland hält im Falle von Guano ergänzende Schutzmassnahmen nicht für erforderlich und epidemiologisch nicht für gerechtfertigt.”

France made the following statement:

“La délégation française rappelle la définition du guano donnée par l’AFSSA dans son avis du 15 novembre 2005. Sur cette base, et dans la contexte de la présente décision, elle estime que le guano correspond à une formation riche en azote, phosphore, et potassium de nature organique, organo-minérale ou minérale, présente à l’état de gisement naturel, résultant de la décomposition et de la transformation complète ou très partielle d’excréments, d’urines et de restes vieillis issus d’oiseaux marins”

Vote: unanimous in favour.

5. Exchange of views and possible opinion of the Committee on a draft Commission Decision amending Decision 2005/734/EC laying down biosecurity measures to reduce the risk of transmission of highly pathogenic avian influenza caused by Influenza virus A subtype H5N1 from birds living in the wild to poultry and other captive birds and providing for an early detection system in areas at particular risk (SANCO/10618/2005) (AEF)
The purpose of Decision 2005/734/EC is to reduce the risk of highly pathogenic avian influenza caused by influenza A virus of subtype H5N1 being introduced into poultry farms and other premises where birds are kept in captivity via wild birds. Pursuant to that Decision, member States are to identify individual holdings keeping poultry or other captive birds, which according to epidemiological and ornithological data should be considered particularly at risk from the virus spread via wild birds.

With the actual migration on the Community and the return movement from the winter habitats, the Commission proposed to prolong the measures until 30 June 2006, however depending on the prevailing risks.

The vote was postponed.

6. Exchange of views and possible opinion of the Committee on a draft Commission Decision laying down a list of third countries from which poultry, hatching eggs, day-old chicks, poultry meat and wild game-bird meat, eggs and egg products for human consumption and specified pathogen-free eggs may be imported into and pass in transit through the Community and the applicable veterinary-certification conditions and amending Decisions 93/342/EEC, 2000/585/EC and 2003/812/EC. (SANCO/10361/2004 Rev.8) (RF) (see point 20 of SCFCAH of 13-14 September 2005 and point 29 of SCFCAH of 5 October 2005 and point 9 of SCFCAH of 10-11 November 2005)

The Commission presented an amended text taking account of comments made by Member States at the last Committee meeting.

Vote to be foreseen at the Committee of 23/11/2005.

Miscellaneous

1. UK distributed and presented an epidemiology report in a quarantine premises in Essex. The virological examination of tissues from two birds that had died in that premises revealed an H5 avian influenza virus which was characterised as a highly pathogenic strain on 21/10/2005. Other birds present at the time of confirmation were culled.

2. DK and IRL insisted on a common attitude being taken as regards implementation measures in relation to risks posed by pigeons

3. NL said that there is a need to launch a discussion on the AI situation in Croatia
4. Conclusions from DG ENV meeting:

Aim of this meeting was to proceed with information as regards wild birds. There is a lot of data available; however there is no final and clear opinion on migration. The ornithologists think that migration starts in September and that the date when risk decreases is open. There is no risk-free period. The Commission expert thinks that the main migration period is from October to mid November. The ornithologists are worried that Commission is taking measures affecting wild birds. It was made clear that so far no measures have been taken and Commission does not intend to take any measures. The Commission thinks that this would be inappropriate.

Question was sent to EFSA concerning the risk presented by wild birds being possible carriers of the virus. Expecting the results by March, but this might be postponed.

NL- what is of concern is that we are dealing with measures which where meant for the autumn migration, we don’t know what the risk is going to be in spring. EFSA’s activities in this area need to be continued. March is already late enough. We need to decide until then what we intend to do with our own measures and need to be prepared for spring.

The Commission outlined 3 possible scenarios:
1) wild birds and migratory birds will soon create a “panzootic” all over the world.
   But this is rather unrealistic considering that the virus seems not spreading so quickly in the high risk areas (Danube delta).
2) the virus might spread here and there in areas laying along migratory routes that are not predictable. The virus is becoming endemic in certain species of wild (migratory) birds and behaves as a low pathogenic virus. Under certain favourable circumstances the virus might give serious mortality in wild birds and spread to domestic poultry.
3) following a major outbreak in wild birds in a lake in Central China, the virus has spread to many other areas due to the wild birds, however it is not becoming endemic in the wild bird populations.
   The second scenario seems to be the most realistic. We must look at places where the virus has spread from migratory birds to poultry. This has only occurred under rather favourable conditions (open air keeping). This has to be considered for the future measures.

5. The Commission’s financial unit informed the German delegation about the amount that will be reimbursed in the framework of the 2004 CSF eradication programme

6. MS were requested to provide a list points of entry for pet birds by 15/11 as provided for in Decision 2005/759/EC art 2 para3
7. MS were also recalled that information about vaccination of birds in zoos should be provided by 30/11.

8. The Commission informed the Member States that a discussion with labs pointed out that quicker and clear procedures to detect H5N1 are needed.

Mission reports are available on the Internet at the following address: http://europa.eu.int/comm/food/fs/inspections/vi/reports/index_en.html