

# Animal health response to avian influenza – an EU perspective

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Maria Pittman

Directorate General for Health and Consumer Protection  
Unit D1 Animal Health and Standing Committees

# Disease control measures

- based on new Avian Influenza Control Directive fully applicable as of July 1<sup>st</sup>
- traditional eradication measures maintained
  - Stamping-out of infected flocks and those suspected of being infected
  - tracing on and tracing back
  - cleaning and disinfection
  - movement restrictions for live animals, people, vehicles, equipment, meat, manure, feed, byproducts, fomites
- aimed at a rapid disease eradication

## Disease control measures (2)

- notification and measures for LPAI H5 and H7
- better diagnostic tools - manual
- laboratory investigations in pigs and as appropriate in other mammals kept on affected poultry holdings
- emergency and now also preventive vaccination

# AI surveillance

- new legal basis for compulsory surveillance programmes and Community co-financing
- revised guidelines based on EFSA scientific opinion and close collaboration with experts from the Community Reference Laboratory, epidemiologists and ornithologists
- new online system for reporting of results for surveillance in wild birds and poultry

## AI surveillance in wild birds - 2006

- **more than 150.000** wild birds investigated:
  - **748 birds found** positive for HPAI H5
  - mainly in period Feb-May in 14 MS
  - predominately swans, ducks, geese and prey birds found dead
  - more than 2 million Euro co-financing for laboratory testing

## AI surveillance in wild birds - 2007

- in the first quarter of 2007 **more than 20.000 wild birds** have been tested
- between late June and early August more the **306 birds tested positive in 3 MS: DE(298),F (7),CZ (1)**
- mainly grebes and swans in a few locations in central part of the EU

# Specific measures for HPAI H5N1

## ■ Wild birds

- reporting of increased morbidity and mortality in wild birds
- notification of positive cases H5N1 cases in wild birds
- zoning, enhanced surveillance in poultry holdings, control of movements of poultry and poultry products around positive findings in wild birds

# Specific measures to prevent HPAI H5N1 introduction into poultry

- biosecurity and early detection systems in poultry holdings
  - drop in water/feed intake and production data etc.
- identification of «high risk areas»
  - proximity to resting places of wild migratory birds in particular of areas with a high density of poultry
- prevention of contact to wild birds
  - by confinement, roofs or nets
  - watering/feeding inside



## Outbreaks of H5N1 in poultry

- measures according new AI Directive
- additional zoning:
  - by identifying a «higher risk area» and a surrounding «lower risk area» functioning as a buffer zone
  - with movement restrictions for live poultry and poultry products
  - publication of restricted areas in the EU Official Journal by a Commission Decision

## Outbreaks in poultry

### ■ 2006 total of 34 outbreaks in 5 MS:

- F (1), SE (1), DK (1), DE (2), HU (29).
- mainly in single poultry flocks where biosecurity has not been effectively implemented and in relation to previous positive findings in wild birds

### ■ 2007 total of 9 outbreaks in 4 MS:

- HU (2), UK (1), CZ (4), DE (3)
- some larger operations involved, but very limited spread
- viruses largely different from 2006 poultry and wild bird viruses, similar to current viruses circulating in the near East, Kuwait, Aserbeidschan, Pakistan suggesting new introductions
- link of UK and HU outbreaks by identity of detected virus revealed

# Vaccination

- protects from clinical signs and disease
- increases resistance for infection
- reduces virus shedding in the environment
- reduces transmission within the flock and to other holdings
- leads therefore also to reduced risk for human exposure to virus
- reduces direct economic losses
- aimed at “die out” of virus with the ultimate goal of virus eradication

## Vaccination (2)

- vaccination becomes more and more accepted at EU and international level
- EFSA opinions recognising AI vaccination as an effective tool
- no « stand alone » measure to be combined with other control measures, biosecurity and surveillance
- proper implementation under official control within EU approved vaccination plans

## Vaccination (3)

- has still its limitations:
  - cumbersome and costly surveillance of vaccinated flocks
  - availability of more DIVA (differentiating between infected and vaccinated animals) companion tests for high throughput testing
  - lack of appropriate vaccines allowing a more rapid onset of immunity
  - lack of field experience
  - unjustified price pressure by retail sector for products from vaccinated birds
  - third country reactions to trade not always predictable

## Vaccination (4)

- so far still only applied at a limited scale within the EU
- Preventive vaccination plans during 2006:
  - NL (free range layers, hobby poultry) to be continued until mid 2008
  - F: free range ducks and geese in identified higher risk areas – not continued
  - DE: research orientated field trial in 3 poultry holdings is ongoing until late 2008
  - Vaccination plans for zoo birds approved in 17 MS ongoing
- Emergency vaccination plan as of 1/10/2007 to combat LPAI infections of H7N3 subtype

## Import restrictions

- Import bans for poultry and poultry products from affected countries
- More stringent rules for the import of captive birds
- Total ban on imports of unprocessed feathers
- Enhanced border controls

# Animal and public health interface

- co-operation on national level between veterinary and public health authorities on public health measures in case of poultry outbreaks
- joint meetings of Chief Veterinary and Chief medical officers in time of crisis
- participation of representatives of EC public health services in Committees, working groups on animal health and annual meetings of the Community and national reference laboratories
- co-operation between EU agencies: EFSA, ECDC, EMEA
- Regular mutual updates by telephone conferences organised by ECDC



# Conclusions

- animal health legislation is harmonised at EU level and binding for Member States.
- new more flexible legislation allows adapting measures to specific and evolving disease situations and provides for different tools to fight the disease based on risk assessment.
- in 2007 the prevention and control measures already in place since late 2005 and 2006 have again led to the successful reduction of the impact of the disease on animal (and public) health (no serious sickness or fatality in humans!)

## Conclusions (2)

- intensive surveillance activity, disease awareness and preparedness in Member States to encounter incursions of HPAI H5N1 virus are high.
- sporadic outbreaks in poultry of HPAI H5N1 have to be expected also in the future in areas at an increased risk for virus introduction depending on the ongoing threat posed by the presence of the disease in third countries.
- it is therefore crucial that all efforts are undertaken to further support third countries financially and by providing expertise and training to combat the disease at its source.



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**Thank you  
for your attention!**

**further information:**

**[http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/diseases/controlmeasures/avian/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/diseases/controlmeasures/avian/index_en.htm)**

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