

**2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Chief Medical Officers and  
Chief Veterinary Officers of the Member States**

**Avian Influenza and Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Planning**

**Brussels, 12 December 2005**

**Conclusions and recommendations**

**A. General aspects**

- 1) The continuing outbreaks of disease in poultry and other birds and of human cases of disease in Asia and the further spread of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza virus H5N1 into Europe, some of which may be due to migratory birds, are cause for serious concern.
- 2) The risk that a human pandemic could originate from this virus is a real one, although it is not possible to predict with certainty if and when this will occur.
- 3) The risk exists that this virus enters the European Union via migratory birds in the near future.
- 4) Those conditions that would facilitate the emergence of a pandemic virus are much less common in Europe than in south-east Asia. However, the human health risks posed by this virus also in Europe should not be neglected.
- 5) A wide set of actions has been put in place in the EU by the veterinary and public health authorities in the last three months to tackle the above threats, in line with the recommendations issued by this group on 22 September 2005.

**B. The immediate threat posed by Avian Influenza**

6) A wide set of Community harmonised measures has been put in place by the Member States to reduce the risk that H5N1 enters poultry farms and other captive bird populations in the EU. However, the magnitude of the risk posed by wild birds is still not well known and it is difficult to predict how the situation in Europe will evolve during the next months.

7) Rapid containment and eradication of virus from poultry and other captive bird populations will continue to be of paramount importance to protect both animal and human health. The new Avian Influenza Directive will be a useful additional tool for this purpose.

8) The second fundamental line for the protection of public health will be to ensure adequate protection of poultry workers and other people exposed to the avian influenza virus taking into account the ECDC and EU-OSHA guidelines.

9) Awareness campaign for all people keeping poultry and in particular for those keeping backyard poultry should be reinforced, so that any suspicion of disease be immediately notified to the competent authorities and so as to ensure that poultry owners take all the appropriate precautions to avoid dangerous contacts with potentially infected birds.

10) The Commission and the Member States should ensure continued coordinated efforts in this area, including on controls and enforcement and keeping all relevant legislation under constant review, so that the most appropriate measures are immediately taken, taking into account the evolution in the situation.

### C. The long term threat posed by avian influenza and the risk for a pandemic

11) The CVOs and CMOs support the efforts of the Commission to assist the coordination of the global response to avian influenza and possible pandemic influenza in the context of the global strategies developed by FAO/OIE and WHO. They welcome the efforts to provide assistance to the affected countries and countries at-risk, in developing country-owned integrated strategies to control the disease at source by strengthening veterinary and public health services and to support regional co-ordination. They have noted the Commission call on Member States to attend the Ministerial Pledging Conference in Beijing in mid-January 2006 and pledge support alongside the Commission to the affected countries and at-risk countries, particularly in Asia and Africa.

12) The CVOs and CMOs welcome the Commission communications on generic and pandemic influenza preparedness planning in the EU and consider that preparedness at national and EU level should be improved taking into account these documents and the results of the Common Ground exercise which tested national plan interoperability and exchange of information and coordination of responses in the EU.

13) The on-going efforts to improve national pandemic preparedness plans through visits to assist in assessment and review workshops organised by the Commission, ECDC and WHO should be intensified.

14) It is noted that the Community provides support through the co-financing of research projects and that a dedicated call for proposal on avian and pandemic influenza will be launched soon. More generally, research and technological development should be further encouraged with a view to increasing knowledge on avian and human influenza and obtaining the diagnostic tools, medicines, in particular vaccines and antivirals, and methods including non-pharmaceutical measures that would enable effective surveillance and control of these scourges.

15) The CVOs and CMOs acknowledge the contribution that the EFSA, the ECDC, the EU-OSHA and the EMEA are making to the formulation of scientific advice and the provision of expertise and recommendations and encourage these Community agencies to continue and intensify their efforts in this area.