

EU ban on the import of wild-caught birds for the pet trade

On 11 January, the European Commission's Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health agreed unanimously on a new Regulation laying down the animal health conditions for imports of certain birds into the EU. The regulation, which will be applicable from 1 July 2007, bans the import into the EU of birds caught in the wild. This comes after a European Food Safety Authority report has highlighted serious risks relating to various stages of this trade. 40 to 60 % of trapped birds die during capture and transport before reaching the EU. A temporary ban on the import of all birds other than poultry into the EU is already in place since October 2005 and will be extended until this Regulation starts applying.

Captive birds from some third countries still imported

The Regulation authorises the import of birds bred in captivity in approved establishments in the following countries (which are also allowed to import poultry): Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Croatia, Israel, New Zealand, Tunisia and the United States.

Approved breeding establishments

Captive birds imported from those countries must come from breeding establishments approved under certain minimum conditions by the competent third country authority. They must secure the services of a veterinarian under the control of this authority. The veterinarian shall be responsible for the day to day compliance with animal health requirements and for the Community legislation on welfare of animal during transport.

Identification as captive birds and testing

Imported birds must be subjected to a laboratory virus detection test to demonstrate absence of avian influenza and Newcastle disease 7 to 14 days before the date of shipment to the EU. They will be tested again during quarantine once arrived in the EU. The birds must also be accompanied with a health certificate and individually identified as captive bred birds originating from the authorised countries through a leg-ring or a microchip.

Quarantine conditions

After arrival in the EU, the birds shall be quarantined for at least 30 days in an approved quarantine facility. Importers must prove with an attestation that the birds will be accepted by a quarantine facility. An official veterinarian shall inspect the conditions of the quarantine, including a clinical inspection of the birds. A list of quarantine facilities and centres approved by the competent national authority for compliance with minimum equipment and management conditions is published by the Commission as an annex to this Regulation. They are the only quarantine facilities authorised to host birds on their arrival. The total journey time from the border inspection post to the quarantine facility must not normally exceed nine hours.

Exemptions

Certain categories of birds are excluded from the scope of this Regulation. They include commercial poultry for consumption, birds imported for conservation programmes, pets accompanying their owners and animals intended for zoos, circuses, amusement parks or experiments. They are already covered by separate Community legislation.

Reporting

Member States must communicate to the Commission each year:

- the number of birds imported via approved quarantines, per species and per approved breeding establishment;
- the mortality data from the animal health certification procedure in the third country to the end of the quarantine period;
- the number of positive cases of avian influenza, Newcastle disease and avian chlamydiosis in quarantine.

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