



Avian influenza (HPAI)

Measures to prevent and contain outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza in domestic poultry

January 2022

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- Starting from the principle that animals are sentient beings and not commodities
- Considering that the extreme industrialisation of poultry farming in the EU amplifies and is co-responsible for the devastating effects of outbreaks of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI)
- Taking into account the potentially serious suffering inflicted during mass killing for disease control
- Considering that EU legislation foresees alternatives to mass depopulation under specific conditions

We take the view that:

For reasons of disease control, sustainability and animal welfare, the EU should set a course away from the intensive rearing of poultry.

The setting up of new poultry production units in areas with a pre-existing high density of poultry farming should be discouraged.

The EU and Member States should invest in the development of effective vaccines against HPAI based on the DIVA method. The European Commission should support pilot projects aimed at testing preventive DIVA vaccination programs coupled with sero-surveillance as the preferred control strategy for HPAI and LPAI.

Member States that correctly adopt the DIVA and sero-surveillance method should be allowed to commercialise their live poultry and poultry products coming from animals that are vaccinated in accordance with the recommendations of the OIE.¹

The preventive killing of healthy animals as a control strategy in case of suspicion of HPAI outbreaks or in cases of LPAI infections should be reconsidered on the basis of recent scientific evidence.

The use of mass killing for disease control causes serious animal welfare problems, and the EU should urgently identify and collect evidence on humane killing methods for the

¹ <https://www.oie.int/download/AVIAN%20INFLUENZA/Guidelines%20on%20AI%20vaccination.pdf>

different farmed avian species, particularly while effective vaccines are developed. All animals must always be killed humanely.²

Improving biosecurity measures in existing intensive poultry production units must become a priority for the sector. At farm-level, secure storage of feed and litter, disinfection of shoes, clothing, equipment and hard standings and walkways, and the requirement for visitors to be poultry-free for a defined period must be adhered to. At national and international level, improving biosecurity by stricter controls on animal movements and trade and transport routes should be considered a priority. As live markets and exhibitions of birds are known risk factors for the spreading of avian influenza, those should be prohibited.

All free-range poultry farms should aim to be equipped with covered and secured verandas as an extension of the barn, so that birds can enjoy natural light at a greater intensity than that provided by windows in houses, and more available space when housing orders are in place in case of disease outbreak. The EU and Member State should make available specific funding to facilitate - where possible - adaptations of existing farms, and in any case for newly built farms.

² <https://www.hsa.org.uk/downloads/killing-for-disease-control.pdf>

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