

Positions of the EE for dealing with the avian influenza type H5N1 in Europe

Discussed and approved during the EE meeting at Leusden on 26th May 2006

Our federation represents as European umbrella organisation the interests of 2.5 million breeders of small animals and birds who are organised in their respective national associations in 23 European countries. **Therefore, the EE regards itself as the competent partner of the panels in charge of the European Union.**

Our members expect in general-

-acknowledging the rules issued by the EE and varying measures in the individual member states- **in forthcoming legislation and other legal instruments of the EU:**

1. the conservation of the breeds and species catered for, as they represent a genetic potential and form part of the European cultural heritage
2. no decisions that can harm the currently valid regulations for the animal welfare
3. preventive measures not only with regard to the welfare and maintenance of human and animal health but also with regard to countering an ongoing estrangement of the relation of man towards animals and the consumption of poultry products
4. to procure the unification and commensurability of strategies, rules, execution and regulations for damages and expenses on a European level

Our well-founded expectations aim at the following points in detail:

The preventive and obligatory measure of keeping the animals locked up in their stables and barns has to be the ultimate measure of disease prevention and should be confined to officially declared areas.

Reasons:

There is not enough scientific research to prove the contagion of domestic poultry with H5N1 by wild or migratory birds of certain species. The first outbreaks in Europe occurred when there were no flocks of migratory birds.

Possible vectors for a contagion stay away from the flocks of domestic poultry, which, in these days, is mostly kept in aviaries.

The routes of the migrating birds do not match the route of the disease. The spreading of the virus in Turkey is a paragon of a man-spread disease.

Therefore we deem stringent border controls for poultry, poultry products and by products of poultry a suitable means of prevention.

The creation of binding and sensible regulations for vaccination within the member states of the EU.

Reasons:

The kind of vaccination that took place in France and the Netherlands, seems to be an inappropriate measure for the time being.

As long as there is no marker vaccine available, such vaccinations conserve local flocks and are in effect nothing but a burden for the breeders with regard to the cost-value ratio.

The EU should provide instead means for a quick development and the approval of a marker vaccine.

Pondering the danger, adequate solutions to organise poultry shows are possible and indispensable.

Reasons:

As long as the disease as such is an animal disease which, complying with the harmonised European standards of keeping animals, has mostly occurred in wild birds, there is no stringent reason to prohibit poultry shows in general.

The paradigm behind such a prohibition: Since we have issued a ban, there are no other outbreaks – this is an argument which does not convince a single knowledgeable breeder, since infections in most other bird specials can be ruled out at the moment.

In countries with domestic poultry flocks found free of H5N1, healthy birds that have been checked by a veterinarian is not exposed to the danger of an infection during the transportation to the show or the during the show itself, for the shows are carried out under veterinarian surveillance. Visitors of poultry shows are not exposed to an endangering contact with poultry or poultry droppings.

Working more towards a fact-based information of the public in the media.

Reasons:

The mass media has caused great uncertainty and fear among the population with its coverage of the subject avian influenza.

Therefore, our federation has the justified fear, that severe damage was caused to the relation between man and bird, which will be hard to undo.

In the future, more stress has to be laid on the fact that the way of living in Europe of man and poultry minimises the danger to man tremendously and that the likelihood of a mutation of the current H5N1 virus into a virus that can be spread from man to man is minimal.

To counter the danger to its members and them consequently leaving the breeding of poultry as a hobby, the affiliated associations of the EE have laboured hard in their media and held council to provide for an intensive prevention. Several hundreds of articles have been published, several hotlines were created and the individual measures decreed by the states have been carried out.