



Ref: VITT 1200/HPAI-Poland

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Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (H5N1) in poultry in Poland

Note: Defra's International Trade Core Function (ITCF) monitors outbreaks of high impact diseases around the world. Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) is among those diseases of major concern.

Disease report

Poland has confirmed an outbreak of avian influenza HPAI (H5N1) in two commercial turkey farms at Myśliborzyce and Uniejewo in the Plock district of central Poland (see map) (European Commission, 2007). This was confirmed on 2 December 2007. The remaining turkeys on the two holdings were to be destroyed on 1 December. Control measures have been put in place in accordance with EC rules.

Situation assessment

During the summer of 2007, Germany, France and Czech Republic reported cases of H5N1 HPAI in wild birds in various locations. There were also outbreaks in domestic poultry in central Germany, the Czech Republic and more recently in the UK (Great Britain) and Romania.



Intra-Community trade in live poultry and poultry meat is subject to EU rules. The European Commission has advised that the TRACES electronic database recorded that no consignments of live poultry were despatched from the affected region of Poland during the risk period. One shipment of live poultry was

received in the UK from Poland via France in mid-October. This shipment originated from Krzeszyce, near Sulecin, in the west of Poland, geographically distant from the outbreaks in central Poland.

The TRACES electronic database records the movement of live poultry and poultry hatching eggs that require veterinary certification under EU rules. Traces does not, however, record poultry meat and other poultry products intended for human consumption that do not require official veterinary certification under EU rules.

Our earlier risk assessments (<http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/diseases/monitoring/pdf/hpai-developments110507.pdf>; <http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/diseases/monitoring/pdf/hpai-europe300606.pdf>) considered the possibility that avian influenza (H5N1) virus may have

been present in wild bird populations in a number of discrete pockets and may remain circulating at a very low level that is difficult to detect. Subsequent events in Germany as well as those in other EU Member States (Czech Republic, France, UK and Romania) may appear to support such a possibility. Sporadic outbreaks of H5N1 may therefore continue to occur within Europe since local or migratory bird movements may possibly carry the disease to unaffected regions over time. This situation of a low level but constant risk may also apply to other types of H5 or H7 avian influenza of highly pathogenic (HPAI) or low pathogenic (LPAI) strains.

Conclusion

On the basis of the above report and our previous risk assessments we consider that these recent HPAI outbreaks in Europe do not significantly alter our previous overall conclusion that there is an increased but still low likelihood that the virus may be introduced from the currently affected areas to the UK.

The likelihood of the introduction of the virus from Poland to the UK via legal importation of live poultry is considered negligible at this stage. However, we will review this in the light of any further developments.

This outbreak once again emphasises the importance of maintaining high biosecurity standards with regard to domestic poultry, especially in areas where migratory birds may seasonally congregate.

On the basis of this and previous outbreaks, further developments may be likely and we will continue to monitor and review the overall situation.

References

European Commission. (2007). 1) Avian Influenza - H5N1 confirmed in two turkey farms in Poland. Urgent Fax 814 (03/12/2007). Directorate D – Animal Health and Welfare, Brussels, D1 (07) D/12867.