



HPAI situation in France
Updated on December 8th 2020

I. INFLUENZA STATUS (UE/OIE)

France has notified the OIE of its first outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in a commercial farm. The virus belongs to the H5N8 strain, not transmissible to humans, which circulates in the wild avifauna in Europe through migratory birds. This is a farm of 6,000 "ready to force-feed" ducks in the southwest of France in the Landes department (40), in the commune of Benesse-Maremmes. Suggestive clinical signs appeared on December 5th 2020, with high mortality. The obtaining of the first analytical results led to the decision to preventive euthanasia of all the ducks as of December 6th 2020. It should be noted that the excellent preparation of the local veterinary services made it possible, between Saturday 5 and Sunday 6 December 2020, to detect the potential outbreak and to eliminate all the birds (the end of slaughter took place around 4 pm), as well as to carry out the 1st cleaning disinfection of the site. This confirms the good consistency and adaptation of the emergency plans put in place in France, based on the principle of early detection and rapid response, as recommended by the OIE. Epidemiological investigations started quickly and are currently underway.

A temporary control zone has immediately been put in place on December 5th 2020 within a radius of 10 kilometers around the farm, with a strict ban on any movement of birds. On December 7th 2020, confirmation of the outbreak by the French national reference laboratory determined the establishment of protection and surveillance zones (3 and 10 kilometers from the outbreak farm) in accordance with Directive 2005/94 / EC. All movement of live animals and avian products into and from the surveillance zone is prohibited. The restricted area includes around 20 farms.

As a reminder, France confirmed on November 16th, 2020 a 1st outbreak of this very same HPAI strain H5N8 in a pet store in the department of Haute-Corse (2B), while the country had been free from the disease for 3 years. The upstream and downstream epidemiological links made it possible to identify the supplier at the origin of the contamination and all the individuals who bought animals from contaminated animal facilities. Two other pet stores were affected: one in the Corse du Sud (2A) department, and the other one in the Yvelines (78) department. All birds from establishments identified as outbreaks were euthanized and cleaning and disinfection was implemented. A total of 52 sites were analyzed as part of the investigations. All outbreaks are closed with the OIE on December 8th 2020 and these three departments may, regain free status within a minimum of 30 days, i.e. mid-January 2021.

In addition, the enhanced surveillance implemented throughout France has made it possible to detect since December 1st three cases of HPAI in wild birds, including 2 of the H5N8 type. Two wild geese have tested positive, one in the Morbihan department (56) the other in the Loire-Atlantique department (44), and 3 swans in the Meurthe-et-Moselle department (54). Only one professional farm (laying hens) has been identified around these cases (within 5 kilometers around the lake where the swans were found), and no other contamination has been identified at this stage in the 3 departments. These findings are notified in accordance with point 8 of Article 10.4.1. of the OIE code.

II. MANAGEMENT MEASURES

1. Implementation of measures in the protection and surveillance zones

Measures in the PZ and SZ	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identification of all commercial farms.• Implementation of protective and biosecurity measures on farms• Implementation of measures for cleaning, disinfection and rest periods• Priority deployment of epidemiological investigations to detect potential new cases and to understand the spread and origin of the disease• A ban on the movement of poultry and bird gatherings
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Additional measures in PZ	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identification of farmyards and health visits to all commercial farms and non-commercial farmyards• Prohibition of placing on the market of any non-plucked poultry that is to be sold to the consumer in its unplucked state• Recommendation to confine all farmyard poultry.
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2. Biosecurity

Each holding is required to have a biosecurity plan. The French health authorities have published two decrees on biosecurity, one that applies to poultry farms (8 February 2016, amended in June 2019), and one that applies to the transport of live birds (14 March 2018). The implementation of these measures is subject to official inspections and is combined with specific training and awareness-raising measures.

The introduction risk of HPAI virus originating from wildlife has increased to a "high" level in metropolitan France since November 16th, 2020 ([Ministerial decree of November 16th, 2020](#)). As a consequence, throughout the country, the following measures have been implemented:

- The confinement or enclosure of poultry farms by a net with a limit on outdoor spaces for the animals;
- The prohibition of bird gatherings (e.g. competitions, fairs or exhibitions); the prohibition of the transport and release of game birds;
- The prohibition of the use of decoys for hunting