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# COMMISSION DECISION

**of 29 January 2004**

**on the implementation of surveys for avian influenza in poultry and wild birds in Member States, to be carried out during 2004**

*(notified under document number C(2004) 134)*

(2004/111/EC)

(OJ L 32, 5.2.2004, p. 20)

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## of 29 January 2004

## on the implementation of surveys for avian influenza in poultry and wild birds in Member States, to be carried out during 2004

*(notified under document number C(2004) 134)*

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THE COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Community,

Having regard to Council Decision 90/424/EEC of 26 June 1990 on expenditure in the veterinary field [1], and in particular Article 20 thereof,

Whereas:

(1) Pursuant to Council Directive 92/40/EEC of 19 May 1992 introducing Community measures for the control of avian influenza [2] regular monitoring of poultry flocks and wild birds in order to assess the possible presence of disease in these populations is not foreseen.

(2) Experience has shown that certain strains of the avian influenza virus, which are currently not covered by the control measures of the Directive, have the ability to mutate to highly pathogenic strains after having circulated in the poultry population for some time.

(3) This situation is liable to cause high mortality in poultry and severe economic losses to the poultry industry, which could be decreased by implementing a screening system in the Member States to allow an earlier detection and control of such precursor strains.

(4) The Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare has issued an opinion on the definition of avian influenza and the use of vaccination against avian influenza. In this report it was recommended to change the definition for avian influenza in order to include more avian influenza strains for which eradication measures are appropriate. Furthermore, surveys should be carried out to determine the prevalence of such strains in different poultry populations. This should allow an estimate of the costs for the modified disease control measures.

(5) In November 2001 the Commission organised a symposium on the preparedness for influenza pandemics in humans. It was stressed that surveys in various animal populations should be carried out to better assess the zoonotic impact of such infections.

(6) Both the zoonotic aspect and the animal health implications underline the need of surveys for influenza in animal populations.

(7) In 2002 and 2003 all Member States have implemented surveys for avian influenza in poultry and most countries have also carried out a screening in wild birds according to Commission Decision 2002/649/EC [3].

(8) The individual programmes and the Community's financial contribution to each of these programmes have been approved by Decision 2002/673/EC [4].

(9) During these surveys the presence of different subtypes of H5 and H7 avian influenza viruses has been detected in poultry in

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[1] OJ L 224, 18.8.1990, p. 19. Decision as last amended by Regulation (EC) No 806/2003 (OJ L 122, 16.5.2003, p. 1.).
[2] OJ L 167, 22.6.1992, p. 1.
[3] OJ L 213, 9.8.2002, p. 38.
[4] OJ L 228, 24.8.2002, p. 27. Decision as amended by Decision 2003/21/EC (OJ L 8, 14.1.2003, p. 37).

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several Member States. Although the current prevalence of avian influenza viruses can be considered rather low, it can be concluded that it is important to follow up these positive findings and to continue the surveillance in the year 2004 to better understand the epidemiology of the avian influenza viruses.

(10) Member States should submit their programmes for approval by the Commission so that financial assistance by the Community may be granted.

(11) Article 32 of the Act of Accession of 2003 lays down that the new Member States are to receive the same treatment as the present Member States as regards expenditure under veterinary funds.

(12) However, no financial commitment may be made for any programme before the accession of the concerned acceding Member State has taken place. Furthermore, the monitoring of certain diseases in acceding Member States can also be co-financed by other Community instruments.

(13) The measures provided for in this Decision are in accordance with the opinion of the Standing Committee of the Food Chain and Animal Health,

HAS ADOPTED THIS DECISION:

*Article 1*

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Member States shall submit for approval to the Commission by 15 June 2004 plans for the implementation of surveys for avian influenza in poultry and wild birds in accordance with the requirements and guidelines laid down in the Annex.

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*Article 2*

The Community's financial contribution towards the measures referred to in Article 1 shall be at the rate of 50 % of the costs incurred in Member States for sampling and analysing of samples up to a maximum of ►M1 EUR 1 000 000 ◄ for all Member States in total.

*Article 3*

This Decision is addressed to the Member States.

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*ANNEX*

**Programmes for surveillance for avian influenza in poultry and wild birds to be carried out in the Member States in 2004**

OBJECTIVES:

1. To detect the prevalence of infections with avian influenza virus subtypes H5 and H7 in different species of poultry by repeating the screening exercise of 2002/2003 in a modified, more targeted manner.

2. To further contribute to a cost-benefit study in relation to eradication of all H5 and H7 subtypes from poultry envisaged by the change in definition of avian influenza.

3. To continue surveillance for avian influenza on a voluntary basis in wild birds, in particular by those Member States which have already good cooperation with ornithological organisations or other bodies. The outcome of such surveillance should further provide valuable information for an early warning system of strains that may be introduced into poultry flocks from wild birds.

4. To contribute to the knowledge on the threats of avian influenza to animal health from wildlife.

5. To foster the connection and integration of human and veterinary networks for influenza surveillance.

A. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS AND GUIDELINES FOR SURVEYS IN POULTRY

— Sampling shall cover the winter period as in many countries a large slaughter of poultry (in particular turkeys and geese) takes place around Christmas.

— 15 March 2005 shall be the date for the submission of the final survey results.

— Testing of samples shall be carried out at national laboratories for avian influenza (NL) in Member States or by other laboratories authorised by the competent authorities and under the control of the NL.

— All results (both serological and virological) shall be sent to the Community Reference Laboratory (CRL) for collation. A good flow of information must be ensured. The CRL shall provide technical support and keep an enlarged stock of diagnostic reagents.

— All AI virus isolates shall be submitted to the CRL. Viruses of H5/H7 subtype shall be subjected to the standard characterisation tests (nucleotide sequencing/IVPI) according to Council Directive 92/40/EEC.

— All positive findings shall be retrospectively investigated at the holding and the conclusions of this investigation shall be reported to the Commission and the CRL.

— Specific protocols to accompany the sending of material to the CRL and reporting tables for collection of survey data shall be provided by the CRL. In those tables the laboratory testing methods used shall be indicated.

— Blood samples for serological examination shall be collected from all species of poultry, from at least five to 10 birds (except ducks and geese) per holding, and from the different sheds, if more than one shed is present on a holding.

— Sampling shall be stratified throughout the whole Member State, so that samples can be considered as representative for the whole Member State, taking into account:

  (a) the number of holdings to be sampled. This number shall be defined so as to ensure the identification of at least one infected holding if the prevalence of infected holdings is at least 5 %, with a 95 % confidence interval (see table 1); and

  (b) the number of birds sampled from each holding shall be defined so as to ensure 95 % probability of identifying at least one positive bird if the prevalence of sero-positive birds is ≥ 30 %.

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— The sampling design shall also consider:

(a) the types of production and their specific risks, such as free range, outdoor keeping, multi age layers, use of surface water, a relatively longer life span, the presence of more than one species on the holding, etc.;

(b) the number of turkey holdings to be sampled, which shall be defined to ensure the identification of at least one infected holding if the prevalence of infected holdings is at least 5 %, with a 99 % confidence interval;

(c) where holdings producing ratites and quails are present in a Member State they shall be included in the programme;

(d) the time period; where appropriate, sampling shall be adapted to identified periods, during which the presence of other poultry hosts on a holding might pose a greater risk for disease introduction;

(e) Member States that must carry out sampling for Newcastle disease to maintain their status as Newcastle disease non-vaccinating countries (Decision 94/327/EC) may utilise these samples from breeding flocks for the surveillance of H5/H7 antibodies.

TABLE 1

**Number of holdings to be sampled of each poultry category (except turkey holdings)**

| Number of holdings per poultry category (except turkey holdings) | Number of holdings to be sampled |
|---|---|
| Up to 34 | All |
| 35-50 | 35 |
| 51-80 | 42 |
| 81-250 | 53 |
| > 250 | 60 |

TABLE 2

**Number of turkey holdings to be sampled**

| Number of turkey holdings | Number of holdings to be sampled |
|---|---|
| Up to 46 | All |
| 47-60 | 47 |
| 61-100 | 59 |
| 101-350 | 80 |
| > 350 | 90 |

B. SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR DETECTION OF INFECTIONS WITH H5/H7 SUBTYPES OF AVIAN INFLUENZA IN DUCKS AND GEESE

— Blood samples for serological testing shall be taken preferably from birds which are kept outside in fields.

— From each selected holding 40-50 blood samples shall be taken for serological testing.

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C. SURVEY FOR AVIAN INFLUENZA IN WILD BIRDS

C.1. *Survey design and implementation*

— Liaisons with bird conservation/watching institutions and ringing stations are necessary. Sampling will probably be best carried out by staff from these groups/stations. Cooperation with hunters for obtaining samples from birds that are hunted may also be possible.

— Experience with the previous surveys has shown that the virus isolation rate was extremely low, therefore sampling should focus on the birds migrating south during autumn and early winter.

C.2. *Sampling procedures*

— Cloacal swabs for virological examination should be taken. In addition to "first year" birds in the autumn, host species with high susceptibility and increased contact with poultry (such as mallard ducks) may offer the highest chance of success.

— The distribution between the different species should ideally be as follows:

70 % waterfowl

20 % shorebirds

10 % other free-living birds.

— Swabs containing faeces, or carefully collected fresh faeces shall be taken from wild birds trapped, hunted and found freshly dead.

— Pooling of up to five samples from the same species is possible.

— Specific care has to be taken for the storage and transport of samples. If rapid transport within 48 hours to the laboratory (in transport medium at 4 °Celsius) is not guaranteed, samples shall be stored and then transported in dry ice at – 70 °Celsius.

D. LABORATORY TESTING

Laboratory tests should be carried out pursuant to the guideline procedures established in Annex III to Council Directive 92/40/EEC (including examination of sera from ducks and geese by HI). However, if laboratory tests not laid down in the Directive 92/40/EEC, nor described in the OIE Terrestrial Manual, are envisaged, Member States shall provide the necessary validation data to the CRL, in parallel to submitting their programme to the Commission for approval. All positive serological findings shall be confirmed by the National laboratories for avian influenza by an haemagglutination-inhibition test, using designated strains supplied by the Community Reference Laboratory:

H5 (a) Initial test using Duck/Denmark/64650/03 (H5N7)

(b) Test all positives with Ostrich/Denmark/72420/96 (H5N2) to eliminate N9 cross reactive antibody.

H7 (a) Initial test using Turkey/England/647/77 (H7N7)

(b) Test all positives with African Starling/983/79 (H7N1) to eliminate N7 cross reactive antibody.