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Self-declaration of the recovery of freedom from avian influenza in poultry by Slovakia

Declaration sent to the OIE on 8 August 2017 by Dr Jozef Bires, OIE Delegate, Director and Chief Veterinary Officer, State Veterinary and Food Administration, Ministry of Agriculture, Bratislava, Slovakia

Situation of highly pathogenic avian influenza

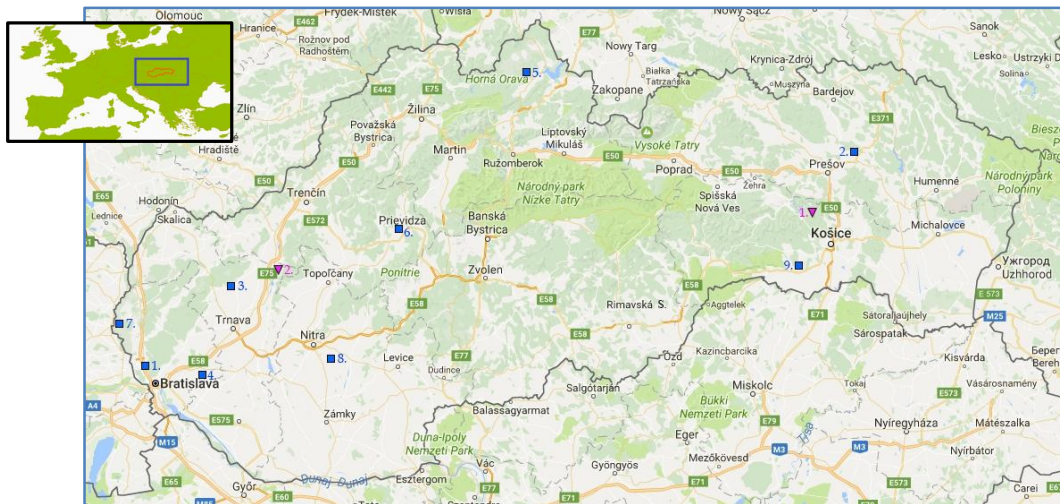
The State Veterinary and Food Administration of the Slovak Republic is pleased to report that there have not been any new outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) detected in poultry since 19 April 2017, when the last HPAI H5N8 outbreak was confirmed.

Within the territory of the Slovak Republic there are currently no active outbreaks or established restricted zones.

On 29 December 2016 the first HPAI H5N8 outbreak was confirmed in the Slovak Republic after 10 years without detection. The previous occurrence of the disease in Slovakia was in February 2006 (H5N1), in two wild birds.

From 29 December 2016 to 19 April 2017 a total of eleven HPAI outbreaks were detected on the territory of the Slovak Republic in seven out of eight regions (Figure No 1). In total nine HPAI H5N8 outbreaks were detected in back-yard flocks, two HPAI H5N8 outbreaks were detected in captive birds (zoological garden and rescue centre for wild animals) (Table No 1). No outbreaks were detected in commercial farms.

Figure 1 – Localisation of HPAI outbreaks in the Slovak Republic



Outbreaks summary:

Back-yard flocks ■		Captive birds ▼	
Outbreak	Region	Outbreak	Region
1. Bratislava Dúbravka	Bratislavský	1. ZOO Košice	Košický
2. Chmeľov Podhrabina	Prešovský	2. Ratnovce	Trnavský
3. Horná Krupá	Trnavský		
4. Janíky	Trnavský		
5. Breza	Žilinský		
6. Bojnice	Trenčiansky		
7. Vysoká pri Morave	Bratislavský		
8. Čechynce	Nitriansky		
9. Ččejevce	Košický		

Control measures and intensified surveillance in response to the outbreaks

Many outbreaks were detected by farmers who reported high mortality rates, as well as the presence of clinical signs (in accordance with Article 37 (2) a) 1 of the Act No. 39/2007 Coll. on veterinary care). After each notification on-site controls and sampling were implemented.

After each report of suspect cases of avian influenza, animal health inspectors visited the concerned holding and took samples for laboratory examination, mainly from either dead birds or animals with clinically signs. Veterinary measures were immediately enforced. In order to prevent spread of the virus and to eradicate the disease, the District Veterinary and Food Administrations after confirmation of HPAI ordered emergency veterinary measures and established protection zones (3 km-radius) and surveillance zones (10 km-radius) around the outbreaks. All commercial holdings in the protection zones were visited by an official veterinarian who carried out clinical examination, as soon as possible after confirmation of the outbreak. If necessary, samples were taken for a laboratory examination according to the Diagnostic Manual (Commission Decision 2006/437/EC)¹.

¹ European Commission Decision 2006/437/EC: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32006D0437&from=FR>

Table 1 – total number of HPAI outbreaks in the Slovak Republic by Region, from December 2016 to April 2017

Region	No of HPAI outbreaks in back-yard flocks	No of HPAI outbreaks in commercial holdings	No of HPAI outbreaks in captive birds
Bratislavsky	2	0	0
Trnavsky	2	0	1
Nitriansky	1	0	0
Trenčiansky	1	0	0
Žilinsky	1	0	0
Prešovsky	1	0	0
Košický	1	0	1
Banskobystrický	0	0	0
Total	9	0	2
		11	

All control measures taken by the State Veterinary and Food Administration were in accordance with EU legislation (Council Directive 2005/94/EC)². All birds were killed on-site and carcasses were transported and destroyed in rendering plants. Ban of movements of poultry, birds, eggs, meat, etc. from the outbreaks and to the outbreaks, without the permission of the relevant competent authority, and the ban of any movements of live and slaughtered poultry, other birds, eggs, meat, etc. in the protection zones and surveillance zones were ordered. Movements were controlled by the police. Preliminary and final cleansing and disinfection were carried out. After performing all ordered measures the emergency veterinary measures were lifted.

An immediate notification and follow-up reports (including the final report) were sent weekly to the OIE World Animal Health Information System (WAHIS) and can be found on the OIE website³.

The last HPAI H5N8 outbreak in poultry was confirmed on 19 April 2017. All 15 laying hens kept in the back-yard holding died within two days. The date of preliminary cleaning and disinfection was on 19 April 2017. The date of last cleaning and disinfection was on 27 April 2017. The restriction zone was lifted on 19 May 2017, and the event was closed and reported to WAHIS on 22 May 2017.

The emergency veterinary measures, which were adopted in 2005, and are still valid, include the following elements:

- Prevention of direct and indirect contact of wild birds, especially waterfowl birds, with poultry;
- Strict separation of waterfowl birds from other poultry;
- Interdiction for employees in registered commercial poultry holdings to keep poultry at home;
- Purchase of poultry only from registered farms with permanent veterinary supervision;
- Place newly purchased poultry in premises that have been pre-cleaned and disinfected;
- Use own work tools for each hall;
- Minimise the number of people who come into contact with poultry;
- Properly use the personal protective equipment;
- Without delay notify to the competent authority any sign of avian influenza in poultry and other captive birds according to the following criteria: decrease in food and water intake of

² European Council Directive 2005/94/EC: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:02005L0094-20080903&qid=1501660239773&from=CS>

³ http://www.oie.int/wahis_2/public/wahid.php/Wahidhome/Home

more than 20%, decrease in egg production of more than 5% over a two-day period, weekly mortality rate of more than 3%, any clinical manifestation or post-mortem change that indicates the avian influenza.

Preventive measures and surveillance to ensure maintenance of freedom

In the Slovak Republic the “Avian influenza survey plan for poultry and wild birds for 2017 year” is implemented in compliance with the requirements of Commission Decision 2010/367/EU⁴.

The design of the programme of surveillance is based on representative sampling.

Active surveillance for:

- (a) low pathogenic avian influenza (LPAI), subtypes H5 and H7, in gallinaceous birds (namely chickens, turkeys, guinea fowl, pheasants, partridges and quails) and ratites thereby complementing other existing early detection systems in gallinaceous birds;

This surveillance has the purpose of obtaining information on circulation of avian influenza viruses in poultry farms through active monitoring. In domestic poultry, there is a possibility that LPAI viruses circulate undetected, as clinical cases are often mild or absent. However, the risk is known that H5 and H7 subtype strains of LPAI circulating into poultry flocks, can mutate in HPAI strains.

- (b) LPAI, subtypes H5 and H7, and highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in domestic waterfowl (namely ducks, geese and mallards for re-stocking supplies of game);

General requirements and criteria for the implementation of the programme are as follows:

- the survey shall be implemented from 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2017.
- sampling shall cover a period appropriate to the production periods for each category of poultry, as required.

Specific requirements for the implementation of the programme are as follows:

1. All positive findings shall be retrospectively investigated at the holding and the conclusions of this investigation shall be reported to the European Commission and the European Union Reference Laboratory (EURL).
2. In the Slovak Republic surveillance is based on a representative sampling scheme in accordance with Annex 1 point 2.2 of Commission Decision 2010/367/EU.
3. The following target populations are included into the sero-prevalence survey: laying hens, free range laying hens, chicken breeders, turkey breeders, duck breeders, geese breeders, fattening turkeys, fattening ducks, fattening geese, farmed game birds (gallinaceous) focusing on adult birds such as breeding birds, farmed game birds (waterfowl), ratites. Broiler and backyard flocks may also be included in surveillance in exceptional circumstances.
4. Samples are collected from all production categories of poultry and all poultry species. At least five to ten birds (except ducks, geese and mallards) are sampled per poultry holding, and from the different sheds, where more than one shed is present in a holding. In case of several sheds, samples are taken from at least five birds per shed. In case of waterfowl's holdings, twenty blood samples are taken for serological testing from each selected holding.
5. The sampling is performed in different regions of the Slovak Republic (in territories administered by the District Veterinary and Food Administrations) in such a manner that the selected regions are representative of the whole Slovak Republic. The following elements are

⁴ European Commission Decision 2010/367/EU <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2010:166:0022:0032:EN:PDF>

taken into account for the selection:

- the number of holdings to be sampled, excluding ducks, geese and mallard holdings; this number is defined 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;
- the number of duck, geese and mallard holdings to be sampled is 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;
- the time period for sampling shall coincide with seasonal production (samples are taken at the farm);
- the number of birds sampled from each holding, except ducks, geese and mallards, is defined to ensure 95% probability of identifying at least one positive bird if the prevalence of antibody-positive birds is $\geq 30\%$. Blood samples for serological examination shall be collected from production categories of poultry and poultry species. At least 5 to 10 birds (except ducks, geese and mallards) are sampled per poultry holding, and from the different sheds, where more than one shed is present on a holding.
- The numbers of ducks, geese and mallards to be sampled in poultry holding is defined to ensure 95 % probability of identifying at least one bird that tests antibody positive for avian influenza where the prevalence of antibody-positive birds is $\geq 30\%$. Twenty blood samples shall be taken in duck, geese and mallard holdings.
- Sampling for viral testing for avian influenza shall not be used as an alternative to serological testing and must be performed solely within the framework of investigations to follow-up serological positive testing results for avian influenza.

The results of surveillance carried out in the three months period since last cleaning and disinfection is reported in Tables from 2 to 7. The overall results of surveillance carried out in 2017 is reported in Table 9.

Tables from 2 to 8– avian influenza serological surveillance (H5/H7) from 19 April 2017 to 19 July 2017 in Slovakia

Table 2

Chicken breeders					
Region	District	Holding	Date of reception	No. of samples	Results
Nitriansky	Komarno	1	27.04.2017	60	negat.
Nitriansky	Komarno	1	03.05.2017	60	negat.
Nitriansky	Nitra	1	03.05.2017	35	negat.
Nitriansky	Nitra	1	03.05.2017	20	negat.
Nitriansky	Nitra	1	03.05.2017	25	negat.
Nitriansky	Nitra	1	03.05.2017	10	negat.
Nitriansky	Pezinok	1	20.06.2017	60	negat.
Nitriansky	Pezinok	1	28.06.2017	60	negat.
Nitriansky	Sala	1	12.07.2017	35	negat.
Total		9		365	negat.

Table 3

Chicken layers					
Region	District	Holding	Date of reception	No. of samples	Results
Nitriansky	Nitra	1	03.05.2017	15	negat.
Nitriansky	Nove Zamky	1	28.06.2017	65	negat.
Presovsky	Kezmarok	1	20.06.2017	5	negat.
Presovsky	Levoca	1	17.05.2017	5	negat.
Nitriansky	Nove Zamky	1	22.05.2017	25	negat.
Trenciansky	Trencin	1	25.05.2017	35	negat.
Nitriansky	Komarno	1	03.07.2017	20	negat.
Nitriansky	Komarno	1	03.07.2017	30	negat.
Nitriansky	Komarno	1	03.07.2017	25	negat.
Kosicky	Trebisov	1	12.07.2017	5	negat.
Kosicky	Trebisov	1	12.07.2017	5	negat.
Nitriansky	Levice	1	19.07.2017	5	negat.
Total		12		240	negat.

Table 4

Turkey breeders					
Region	District	Holding	Date of reception	No. of samples	Results
Nitriansky	Nitra	1	27.04.2017	25	negat.
Nitriansky	Galanta	1	19.04.2017	25	negat.
Total		2		50	negat.

Table 5

Farmed game birds (gallinaceous)					
Region	District	Holding	Date of reception	No. of samples	Results
Nitriansky	Nove Zamky	1	24.04.2017	5	negat.
Kosicky	Sobrance	1	12.05.2017	5	negat.
Nitriansky	Nove Zamky	1	24.04.2017	5	negat.
Nitriansky	Levice	1	28.06.2017	5	negat.
Total		4		20	negat.

Table 6

Ratites					
Region	District	Holding	Date of reception	No. of samples	Results
Trnavsky	Skalica	1	11.05.2017	5	negat.
Kosicky	Roznava	1	30.06.2017	5	negat.
Kosicky	Michalovce	1	17.05.2017	3	negat.
Total		3		13	negat.

Table 7

Fattening duck					
Region	District	Holding	Date of reception	No. of samples	Results
Kosicky	Michalovce	1	19.05.2017	20	negat.
Kosicky	Trebisov	1	12.07.2017	20	negat.
Total		2		40	negat.

Table 8

Fattening geese					
Region	District	Holding	Date of reception	No. of samples	Results
Kosicky	Michalovce	1	19.05.2017	20	negat.
Trnavsky	Galanta	1	07.07.2017	20	negat.
Trnavsky	Galanta	1	07.07.2017	20	negat.
Total		3		60	negat.

In the territory all poultry holdings have to be sampled at least once a year. The samples are taken by official veterinarians or by approved private veterinarians who are in charge of taking official samples.

Table 9– avian influenza serological surveillance (H5/H7) from 01 January 2017 to 01 June 2017 in Slovakia

Category	No. of samples	Results
Chicken breeders	371	negat.
Chicken layers	346	negat.
Turkey breeders	145	negat.
Farmed game birds	27	negat.
Ratites	24	negat.
Fattening duck	20	negat.
Fattening geese	20	negat.
Total	953	negat.

Diagnostic capabilities

Laboratory tests shall be carried out in accordance with the avian influenza Diagnostic Manual (Commission Decision 2006/437/EC) laying down the procedures for the confirmation and differential diagnosis of avian influenza (including examination of sera from ducks and geese by a haemagglutination-inhibition test).

- Laboratory diagnostic is performed by the National Reference Laboratory – The State Veterinary and Food Institute -Veterinary Institute in Zvolen. The National Reference Laboratory shall submit all results of serological and cultivation testing to the State Veterinary and Food Administration of the Slovak Republic, and the results shall be submitted to the EURL for their comparison and information exchange.
- All avian influenza virus isolates shall be submitted to the EURL in accordance with the European Community legislation. Isolates of subtypes H5/H7 shall be submitted without delay and shall be subjected to the standard characterisation tests (nucleotide sequencing/IVPI) according to the above mentioned avian influenza Diagnostic Manual.
- All results shall be sent to the EURL for Avian Influenza for collation. A good flow of information must be ensured. The EURL shall provide technical support and keep an enlarged stock of diagnostic reagents.
- The Slovak National Reference Laboratory shall submit to the EURL, H5 or H7 positive sera collected from Anseriformes in order to establish an archive to facilitate future test development.
- All positive serological findings shall be confirmed by the National Reference Laboratory for avian influenza by a haemagglutination – inhibition test, using designated strains supplied by the EURL for Avian Influenza:
 - for H5 (a) Initial test using teal/England/7894/06 (H5N3);
(b) Test all positives with Chicken/Scotland/59 (H5N1) to eliminate N3 cross reactive antibodies;
 - for 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 antibodies.

All positive serological findings must be followed up at the poultry holding by epidemiological investigations and further sampling for testing by viral methods in order to determine, if active infection of avian influenza virus is present on the poultry holding. The conclusions of all those investigations shall be reported to the European Commission.

Avian influenza surveillance in wild birds is based on PCR testing of dead and dying wild birds of the species listed in the attachment of the avian influenza Survey plan.

Conclusions

Bearing in mind that:

- stamping out measures were adopted that included cleaning-up and disinfecting all the affected farms;
- three months have elapsed as stipulated in Article 10.4.3. of the OIE *Terrestrial Animal Health Code* since the end of the clean-up and disinfection operations;
- surveillance has been performed in accordance with Articles 10.4.27. to 10.4.33. of the OIE *Terrestrial Code* during that three-month period.

The OIE Delegate of Slovakia declares that the country complies with the requirements for a country free from infection with avian influenza in poultry as of 8 August 2017 in accordance with Article 10.4.3. of the OIE *Terrestrial Code* and in compliance with the information provided in WAHIS.