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

Self-declaration submitted to the OIE on 12 June 2020 by Dr Zbyněk Semerád, Director General State Veterinary Administration, Ministry of Agriculture, Czech Republic, OIE Delegate for Czech Republic.

I. Information about Czech Republic status regarding avian influenza

The State Veterinary Administration (SVA) of the Czech Republic is pleased to report that there have not been any newly detected outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) detected in poultry since 17 February 2020¹, when the last HPAI H5N8 was confirmed.

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

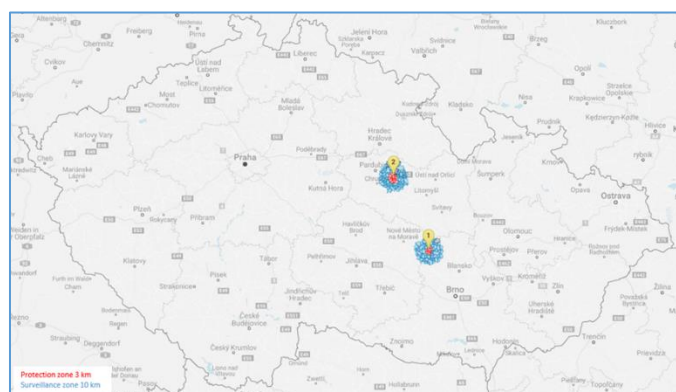
On 17 January 2020² avian influenza H5 was identified and subtype H5N8 was confirmed by the National Reference Laboratory on 18 January 2020. The outbreak was confirmed in the Czech Republic after 2 years without detection. The previous occurrence of the disease in the Czech Republic was in 2017 (H5N8, H5N5), in poultry, wild birds and captive birds.

From 18 January 2020 to 17 February 2020 a total of two HPAI outbreaks were detected on the territory of the Czech Republic in two out of 14 regions (Figure No 1). The first HPAI H5N8 outbreak was detected in a back-yard flock and the second HPAI H5N8 outbreak was detected in a commercial farm.

¹ [WAHIS report No. 33328](#)

² [WAHIS report No. 32993](#)

Figure 1 – Localisation of HPAI outbreaks and restriction zones in the Czech Republic Outbreak summary:



Poultry	
Outbreak	Region
1. Štěpánov nad Svratkou – back-yard flock	Vysocina
2. Slepoticke – commercial farm	Pardubice

II. Control measures and intensified surveillance in response to the outbreaks

Both outbreaks were detected by farmers who reported high mortality rates (in accordance with Article 11 of the Veterinary Act No 166/1999 Coll. ³). After each notification on-site controls and sampling were implemented.

After each report of suspect cases of avian influenza, official veterinarians visited the concerned holding and took samples for laboratory examination, mainly from either dead birds or animals with clinical signs. Veterinary measures were immediately enforced. In order to prevent spread of the virus and to eradicate the disease, the Regional Veterinary Administration 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/EC⁴)

The results of intensified surveillance carried out in the protection zones around the outbreaks are reported in Table 1.

Table 1 – Avian influenza virological surveillance in the protection zones around the outbreaks

Region	District	Holding	No. of samples (tracheal/oropharyngeal and cloacal swabs)	Results*
Vysocina	Žďár nad Sázavou	20	270	negative
Pardubice	Pardubice	17	460	negative
Total		37	730	negative

*RT-PCR AIV used for virological testing

³ Veterinary Act No 166/1999 Coll., : http://eagri.cz/public/web/mze/legislativa/pravni-predpisy-mze/tematicky-prehled/Legislativa-MZe_uplna-zneni_zakon-1999-166-viceoblasti.html

⁴ European Council Decision 2006/437/EC: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32006D0437&qid=1590487021631&from=CS>

All control measures taken by the SVS were in accordance with EU legislation (Council Directive 2005/94/EC⁵). All birds in outbreaks 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. 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 to the OIE World Animal Health Information System (WAHIS) and can be found on the OIE website⁶.

The last HPAI H5N8 outbreak in poultry was confirmed on 17 February 2020. All poultry within the holding were killed from 17 February to 20 February 2020 and all killed animals were immediately transported to rendering plants and destroyed. The date of preliminary cleaning and disinfection was on 20 February 2020. The date of final cleaning and disinfection was on 12 March 2020. The restriction zone was lifted on 23 March 2020, and the event was closed on 25 March 2020 and reported to WAHIS on 27 March 2020.

The Czech surveillance programme and strategy in order to demonstrate freedom is in accordance with Articles 10.4.27. to 10.4.33. of the *Terrestrial Code*.

Passive surveillance for avian influenza has been in place since 2005 - early warning system. According to the Veterinary Act No 166/1999 Coll. as amended, all farmers have to report disease suspicions (high mortality or clinical signs) to the competent authority. Farmers with commercial holdings have the obligation to record the changes in poultry health according to the Veterinary Act and Decree No 342/2012 Coll.⁷ In case of unusual changes in poultry health, farmers have to contact the competent authority. The following changes in poultry health are mandatory to be notified:

- drop in feed and water intake higher than 20 %,
- drop in egg production higher than 5 % for more than two days,
- mortality rate higher than 3 % in a week,
- any clinical sign or post-mortem lesion suggesting avian influenza.

In addition to the passive surveillance, active surveillance was carried out during the three-month period after stamping out policy and preliminary disinfection in line with Articles 10.4.27. to 10.4.33. The active surveillance included official checks in the poultry holdings in the protection zones selected on the basis of risk analysis. The risk factors were for example: the number of poultry kept on the holding, the farms located close to water bodies, the farms with poultry of different age groups or different poultry species, etc. During official inspections, no clinical signs or high mortality were found during the three-month period.

In the Czech Republic the “Avian influenza surveillance programme for poultry and wild birds for 2020 year” is implemented in compliance with the requirements of Commission Decision 2010/367/EU⁸. The surveillance is based on a representative sampling scheme in accordance with Annex 1 point 2.2 of Commission Decision 2010/367/EU.

⁵ European Council Directive 2005/94/EC: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/CS/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32005L0094&qid=1590152526098&from=CS>

⁶ WAHIS report No. 33771

⁷ Decree No 342/2012 Coll., : http://eagri.cz/public/web/mze/legislativa/pravni-predpisy-mze/tematicky-prehled/Legislativa-MZe_uplna-zneni_vyhlaska-2012-342.html

⁸ European Commission Decision 2010/367/EU: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32010D0367&qid=1590576589477&from=CS>

Active surveillance for:

- a) low pathogenic avian influenza (LPAI), subtypes H5 and H7, in gallinaceous birds (namely *Gallus gallus f. domestica*, turkeys, guinea fowl, pheasants, partridges and quails) thereby complementing other existing early detection systems in gallinaceous birds;
- b) 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 in poultry flocks, can mutate in HPAI strains.
- c) LPAI, subtypes H5 and H7, and HPAI in domestic waterfowl (namely ducks, geese and mallards for re-stocking supplies of game);

The surveillance programme is applied on the whole territory of the Czech Republic, so that samples are considered as representative for the whole of the Czech Republic. The programme is implemented in all 14 regions in the Czech Republic. All regions are divided into the smaller areas - districts.

The samples are taken by official veterinarians or by approved private veterinarians who are in charge of taking official samples.

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) and farmed game birds (waterfowl). Samples are collected from all production categories of poultry and all poultry species. Samples from ten birds (except ducks, geese and mallards) are taken at each tested poultry holding, and from the different sheds, where more than one shed is present in a holding. In case of holdings with waterfowls, twenty blood samples are taken for serological testing from each selected holding. ELISA test is used for initial serological screening of blood samples in poultry. In the case of positive ELISA reaction, typing by HI test (haemagglutination inhibition test) is performed. If HI tests confirm H5 or H7 antibodies, an epidemiological investigation and sampling for testing by virological methods is performed on a poultry holding.

The overall results of active surveillance on the whole territory of the Czech Republic carried out in 2020 are reported in Table 2.

Table 2 – Avian influenza serological surveillance (H5/H7) from 1 January 2020 to 28 May 2020 in the Czech Republic

Category	No. of samples	Results
Laying hens	150	negative
Free range laying hens	10	negative
Geese breeders	40	negative
Fattening turkeys	70	negative
Fattening ducks	160	negative
Farmed game birds (gallinaceous)	30	negative
Farmed game birds (waterfowl)	40	negative
Total	500	negative

III. Measures to maintain freedom

Passive surveillance for avian influenza has been in place since 2005 - early warning system. According to the Veterinary Act No 166/1999 Coll. as amended, all farmers have to report disease suspicions (high mortality or clinical signs) to the competent authority. Farmers with commercial holdings have the obligation to record the changes in poultry health according to the Veterinary Act and Decree No 342/2012 Coll.⁹

Awareness programme

Information related to avian influenza situation in the Czech Republic, in Europe (ADNS) and from third countries (from WAHIS) and implementation of appropriate measures are regularly provided by publications on the SVA website. The present health situation and level of biosecurity measures in place are also announced by the press releases, the official SVA letters to various concerned organizations, publication of articles in breeding magazines and through professional journals.

Control import requirements

Import of poultry and poultry products is done in accordance with the relevant EU regulation which include the AI requirements in EU Council Directive 2009/158/EC¹⁰ on animal health conditions governing intra-Community trade in, and imports from third countries of, poultry and hatching eggs.

Wild bird surveillance programme

Avian influenza passive surveillance in wild birds is based on PCR testing of dead and sick wild birds. The surveillance programme is implemented in the whole country and is targeted especially on birds belonging to "higher risk" species listed in Annex II of Decision 2010/367/EC and areas close to the ponds, lakes and waterways where birds were found dead; and in particular when these areas are in proximity to domestic poultry farms.

IV. Conclusions

Considering that:

- prior to the occurrence of new outbreaks in January and February 2020, the Czech Republic was free from avian influenza viruses in poultry;
- stamping out policy was applied (including cleaning-up and disinfection of all the affected farms)
- three months have elapsed as stipulated in Article 10.4.3. of the OIE Terrestrial 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 Czech Republic declares that the country complies with the requirements for recovery status as a country free from infection with avian influenza in poultry as of 12 June 2020, in compliance with Article 10.4.3. of the OIE *Terrestrial Code* (Edition 2019) and in accordance with the information provided in WAHIS.

⁹ Decree No 342/2012 Coll., : http://eagri.cz/public/web/mze/legislativa/pravni-predpisy-mze/tematicky-prehled/Legislativa-MZe_uplna-zneni_vyhlasaka-2012-342.html

¹⁰ European Council Directive 2009/158/EC: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32009L0158&qid=1593758545973&from=CS>

Czech Republic has summarised the information compiled to demonstrate compliance with the OIE *Terrestrial Code* requirements. Member Countries seeking additional information or clarification are invited to contact directly the Delegate of Czech Republic.

Statement to be included in the self-declaration document.

I, the undersigned, Zbyněk Semerád, DVM, Director General (CVO)

Delegate of the Czech Republic

to the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), takes responsibility for the self-declaration of freedom from

avian influenza in poultry

(disease)

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Drawn up on 12.1.6.1.2020

Signature of the Delegate:

