

**First Meeting
of the
Regional Steering Committee of the FAO/OIE GF-TADs for Europe**
OIE Headquarters, Paris, 13-14 October 2005

Recommendation No. 2

The role of wildlife in the spread of highly pathogenic avian influenza

CONSIDERING THAT

The current outbreaks of avian influenza caused by highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) virus in South East Asia are responsible for considerable social and economic consequences, and are threatening the basic livelihoods of millions of people in the region,

The disease is currently spreading to other regions including Southern Europe,

The HPAI virus might undergo reassortment or adaptive mutation and lead to a human pandemic,

The occurrence of the disease in poultry has sometimes been linked to infections in wild birds,

The OIE mission comprising veterinary epidemiologists, laboratory specialists, ornithologists and wildlife experts that visited Siberia to carry out investigations on the possible link between infection of wild birds and the occurrence of the disease in poultry, has indicated that there is some circumstantial evidence to indicate a role of wildlife,

The role of wildlife in the spread of the virus is now more evident in the light of the new information coming from Turkey pointing out the close resemblance between the viruses isolated from wild birds in Novosibirsk in Russia and Lake Quichai in the People's Republic of China and that isolated from domestic poultry in Turkey, thus indicating the need for more in-depth research and data analysis,

The OIE has already programmed three other expert missions to Russia with defined terms of reference which include recommendations for the laboratory at Vladimir to comply with OIE Reference Laboratory standards. This project would benefit from financial support from the EC and technical expertise from OIE through the OIE/FAO OFFLU network,

THE FIRST MEETING OF THE REGIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE OF THE GF-TADS FOR EUROPE
RECOMMENDS THAT

1. Countries in which the infection is likely to be introduced by wild birds, carry out active surveillance and biosecurity measures according to risk assessments and monitor HPAI infection in domestic poultry and wild birds. These countries would include those that lie on the migratory routes of wild birds and where wild birds coming from various regions overwinter, breed or moult.
2. Countries at risk collaborate with the joint OIE/FAO network of expertise (OFFLU) in sharing scientific information and virus isolates to enable the genetic characterisations of viruses in order to trace their origin.

3. All countries prepare and update, if necessary, their emergency management and risk communication plans as new scientific information on the role of wild birds in the dissemination of infection becomes available.
4. OIE/FAO liaise with international donors to provide assistance to countries at risk to ensure that the expertise is available for the identification of virus strains locally or in OIE/FAO Reference laboratories. The support to enable the Vladimir laboratory to become an OIE Reference Laboratory for avian influenza will be considered as a top priority.
5. Early detection of disease, rapid response after disease suspicions and incursions, availability of an efficient 'farmers compensation scheme' be considered crucial issues in the control of avian influenza.
6. Generic actions on compliance with OIE international standards on quality of Veterinary Services be also considered as a priority in order to control the world-wide crisis of avian influenza. This position will be presented during the International Conference on avian influenza, which will be held from 7 to 9 November 2005 in Geneva, Switzerland.
7. The present recommendation be communicated to other GF-TADs Steering Committees for strong consideration, particularly as regards monitoring of HPAI virus in migratory birds.