

Current situation on highly pathogenic avian influenza

(31/01) In southern Japan, researchers at Kyushu University have found blowflies carrying the bird flu virus. This raises concerns about a possible new transmission route through which the virus can spread. According to a study published in the journal "Scientific Reports", the researchers studied blowflies in a wild crane colony in Izumi City. "Out of 648 blowflies, 14 carried the virus, which corresponds to a prevalence in blowflies of 2.2 percent, which is an enormous percentage compared to other diseases spread by insects", said Ryosuke Fujita, first author of the study and associate professor at the Faculty of Agriculture at Kyushu University.

In winter, the peak season for bird flu, thousands of cranes migrate to the Izumi City area, where they are particularly susceptible to infection due to their dense populations. In the winter of 2022/23, 1,600 cranes from a colony of 10,000 birds died of bird flu. Scientists set up flytraps at various locations in Izumi City. According to the report, genetic tests confirmed that the trapped flies carried the same virus strain that infected the crane colony. The researchers suspect that the blowflies could contaminate surfaces, food sources and water sources as they migrate from place to place. Healthy birds can then become infected through direct contact with these contaminated sources or by ingesting adult or larval-shaped blowflies.

Unlike birds and mammals, which are infected by the virus and in which it multiplies, blowflies pick up the virus from infected dead birds or their waste. According to the study, the virus remains infectious for up to two days. Blowflies are capable of flying at least 2 kilometres per day, so it would be possible for them to reach nearby poultry farms or other wild bird populations within a 4-kilometer radius, according to the researchers.

The authors note that implementing measures to eliminate blowflies in Japan could be relatively easy, as farmers typically use closed housing systems to control infections and increase production. "By keeping areas clean and using fly control methods such as fine nets or insecticides, we can reduce the risk of virus spread in closed poultry farms. However, in outdoor farms in other countries and in wild bird populations, fighting blowflies can be logistically impossible," says Fujita..

Brazil declares the New Castle Disease outbreak over

(31/02) Brazil has officially declared the end of the outbreak of Newcastle disease in the domestic poultry population. A corresponding communication from the Ministry of Agriculture was recently sent to the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH). Since there is no new suspicion of an outbreak of the disease, the emergency area has been reduced, according to the government. According to the Brazilian ministry, the surveillance measures are now continuing within a radius of 10 kilometres around the affected broiler farm in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, which is still being controlled. Special requirements are to continue to apply to animal transport. According to official information, the export of poultry products also remains restricted. Accordingly, no poultry meat will continue to be delivered to China in accordance with the agreed hygiene protocols. According to the Ministry, no goods from the emergency area will be exported to the European Union.

The Directorate-General Sante at the EU Commission informed the EPEGA office on request, that the Commission receives regular updates from Brazil. That information is shared with the competent authorities from all Member States. In this respect, Brazil informed that, initially, it imposed a restriction on the export of poultry meat and poultry genetic material to the European Union for the entire state of Rio

Grande do Sul. Due to the progress of the investigations and the favourable outcomes, the area under restriction has been reduced.

To conclude, trade from Brazil of fresh poultry meat can continue from the areas that are not under restriction related to the Newcastle disease outbreak, as imposed by the Brazilian authorities. The competent authority of Brazil must ensure that EU animal health requirements provided for in the EU legislation (such as Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/692(2) and Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/404)) for entry into the Union of relevant consignments are met and that such consignments are properly certified.

The situation is under constant review by the Commission services and so far, the measures taken by the Brazilian authorities (including the application of regionalisation) in relation to this outbreak have not been contested.

Current situation on African swine fever

(31/03) On 2 August, Implementing Regulation (EU) 2024/2139 laying down specific control measures for African swine fever (ASF) and amending Annexes I and II to Implementing Regulation (EU) 2023/594 was published in the Official Journal L. Previously, there have been new outbreaks of African swine fever in wild porcine animals in the **Greece, Italy and Poland**, as well as new outbreaks of African swine fever in kept porcine animals in **Germany, Lithuania and Poland**.

Implementing Regulation (EU) 2024/2139 is available at the following link:

http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg_impl/2024/2139/oj

Statement on the consumption of wild boar liver and intake of PFAS

(31/04) The German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) has published a statement entitled “The consumption of wild boar liver contributes to a high intake of PFAS”. In this report, the BfR assessed possible health risks from the intake of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) through the consumption of wild boar liver. The background to the statement was data from Schleswig-Holstein: In all of the twelve wild boar liver samples examined there, the applicable EU maximum levels for one of the four compounds, perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS), or the sum of the four PFAS, were exceeded. In its risk assessment, the BfR concludes that the estimated long-term exposure based on the reported PFAS levels in wild boar liver (mean value, consumption of one serving once a year) leads to an exceedance of the tolerable weekly intake. According to the study, people who eat wild boar liver with a content at the reported level (mean value) have a medium probability of adverse health impacts.

Imports into Northern Ireland - Changes in trade in goods for United Kingdom tariff rate quotas relating to non-commercial processing

(31/07) Under the Withdrawal Agreement between the EU and the United Kingdom, the Joint Committee set up for this purpose was granted powers in relation to the movement of goods. Thus, the Joint Committee is empowered to adopt decisions establishing the conditions under which processing is not to be considered as commercial processing and the criteria for considering that a good brought into Northern Ireland from outside the Union is not at risk of subsequently being moved into the Union. Now, in relation to the application of the United Kingdom's tariff rate quotas, inter alia, to imports of poultry products into Northern Ireland the rules laid down in the Withdrawal Agreement have been improved. The corresponding Decision No. 1/2024 (2024/2135) was published in the Official Journal L on 7 August 2024.

Changes have been made to the criteria for assuming that there is no risk of subsequent shipment into the Union. The annex to the Decision lists the commodity codes, the country of origin and the maximum an-

nual quantity for the quotas in the poultry sector (from p. 29), as well as which quota duty rates and duty rates outside the quota apply in the EU and the United Kingdom.

Decision No. 1/2024 is available at the following link: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2024/2134/oj>

New EU pollutant rules for pig and poultry farms in force

(31/08) The EU's new Industrial and Livestock Rearing Emissions Directive enters into force. The revised rules are intended to reduce emissions from large industrial plants as well as pig and poultry farms, according to the European Commission. The EU member states now have two years to adapt their national laws to the directive. The Brussels authority expects the law to reduce emissions of pollutants such as particulate matter, sulphur dioxide or nitrogen oxide by up to 40 percent by 2050. Farms such as particularly large pig and poultry farms were already affected by the regulations - but the current rules will be expanded, according to the Commission. In the worst case, infringements can be punished with fines of at least 3 percent of annual turnover. Competent authorities are also to be given more powers to temporarily shut down plants that do not meet the regulations.

The Commission had originally campaigned for stricter rules. This is because electricity generation, waste incineration or intensive livestock farming are responsible for harmful substances in the air, water and soil. The authority had therefore presented a draft law in April 2022, which was adapted in negotiations with the European Parliament and EU member states. Originally, significantly more farms were to be regulated by the directive because, according to the Commission, they are responsible for a lot of ammonia and methane emissions. This went too far, especially for the European Parliament. Cattle breeding will continue to be exempt from the rules.

Paris-based start-up applies for approval for lab-grown duck foie gras

(31/09) In France, the start-up company "Gourmey" has applied for authorisation for duck foie gras cultivated in the laboratory. The Paris-based company recently announced that it had submitted applications to the licensing authorities of the United States, the United Kingdom, Switzerland and Singapore. In addition, such an application was also addressed to the EU Commission and its testing authority, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). According to "Gourmey", it is the first application for approval of so-called laboratory meat in the EU beyond the scope of the Novel Foods Regulation. Corresponding approvals have so far been granted in Brussels mainly for the use of various insect products. The start-up was confident that EFSA and subsequently the Commission will grant the application. "No genetically modified or genetically modified cells" are used.

The livestock industry in the European Union is alarmed by a recent application for the authorisation of a laboratory meat product. The industry organisation "European Livestock Voice" warned last week of impending monopoly positions. If such a product were to be approved, there would be a risk that the processing industry would fall behind, according to the criticism. The laboratory products could be a problem, especially for costly niche products such as duck foie gras. This is especially the case if individual companies with a lot of market power can offer their "imitations" at a lower cost than the original. Since production in the laboratory cannot be easily imitated, there is a risk of market failure, warns the industry organisation. According to the industry organisation, the environmental impact of lab-grown products can be much more negative than that of traditional animal husbandry. In this context, reference is made to the high energy requirements of the bioreactors required for cell growth. It also refers to media reports that "Gourmey" has invested 48 million euros to build a 4,300 square meter innovation and production centre. If laboratory meat is approved in the EU, there is also a threat of a massive loss of culture, tradition and variety of tastes, according to "European Livestock Voice". The Commission, Council and EU Parliament are called upon to prevent approval by means of laws. EFSA is also to adapt its guideline. Members of

“European Livestock Voice” include the European Livestock and Meat Trade Union (UECBV) and the Association of European Poultry Processors and Traders (AVEC).

USDA Sets New Standards for Salmonella in Poultry

(31/10) The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) wants to curb salmonella infections caused by poultry consumption. To this end, it has now submitted a regulatory proposal for the processing of raw poultry products together with the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), which is assigned to it. This was preceded by a reassessment of the previous strategy for controlling salmonella contamination in poultry. The proposal provides for the establishment of final product standards. The aim is to prevent raw chicken or turkey products containing salmonella in a concentration of more than nine colony-forming units (CFU) per gram and a serotype classified as hazardous to health from entering the market. The proposal also requires poultry farms to develop a microbiological monitoring programme to prevent contamination with pathogens throughout the slaughter system.

The FSIS estimates that there are 125,000 severe salmonella infections caused by the consumption of chicken meat in the United States annually and nearly 43,000 severe salmonella infections caused by turkey meat. Although the data indicate that the contamination of poultry products with these pathogens has decreased, no decrease in salmonella infections could be observed, according to the authority.

Imprint

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