

Current situation on highly pathogenic avian influenza

(32/01) In Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, highly pathogenic avian influenza of the type H5N1 has been detected in two neighbouring flocks with a total of around 6,500 ducks and geese in Zarnewan, Rostock district. The outbreak was confirmed by the Friedrich Loeffler Institute (FLI) on 12 August 2024. The district of Rostock has set up a protection zone with a radius of three kilometres around the affected farms and a surveillance zone with a radius of ten kilometres. An HPAI outbreak of subtype H7N5 had already been confirmed in **Germany** at the beginning of July in Lower Saxony, Grafschaft Bentheim, directly on the Dutch border, in a large laying hen farm with 90,000 animals. No further outbreaks were reported from Europe in July.

According to the latest information from the FLI, the monthly case numbers in wild birds and poultry in **Europe** in July are at a low level, as in the two previous months. In Europe, they have not been as low as in the current epidemic year for wild and domestic birds since 2019-2020. A certain herd immunity, the decimation of certain wild bird populations, the absence of a new HPAI virus and/or the reduced search for dead wild birds could explain this decrease in the number of cases. EFSA expects the number of cases in wild birds in Europe to remain low in the coming weeks, at least until the autumn migration of waterfowl.

In the **United States**, the situation has evolved with further H5N1 cases in dairy cows across several states, as can be seen on the USDA website at the following link: (<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/avian/avian-influenza/hpai-detections/hpai-confirmed-cases-livestock>). According to the FLI, both the risk of introduction of the US HPAI H5N1 strain and the risk of infection of cows with HPAI H5 viruses occurring in Europe are considered to be very low. Nevertheless, increased vigilance is recommended. Apart from the United States, there is no evidence of similar HPAI H5N1 infections in any other country in the world.

Scientists at Wageningen University have used a quantitative risk model to find that the faeces of wild birds infected with avian influenza can only transmit the animal disease through the air in exceptional cases, at least when it comes to poultry kept indoors. According to the study published in July, the probability of the animal disease being introduced into a poultry farm in the Netherlands via faecal particles in the air is very low. According to the calculations, such a case should only occur about every 455 years. In addition to the total number of poultry farms and the length of the bird flu season, the model also included parameters such as the spread of suspended particles in the air and the resistance of the virus particles. According to the scientists, however, the model calculations are accompanied by great uncertainties. To further reduce the risk of infections in livestock farms, they suggest cleaning paved areas around the stables where the droppings of wild birds could dry. From the scientists' point of view, however, the usual hygiene measures must have priority.

The study by Wageningen University is available at the following link: <https://www.mdpi.com/2076-0817/13/7/571>

Current situation on African swine fever

(32/02) In July, the number of cases of African swine fever (ASF) in **wild boar** in Europe did not change significantly, as the Friedrich Loeffler Institute (FLI) currently reports. In **Germany**, however, the number of cases rose significantly to 105 compared to 39 in June. Only 17 cases were reported from the long-infected areas in eastern Germany (Brandenburg 16, Saxony 1), but there were also 68 cases from Hesse and, for the first time, a further 20 cases from neighbouring Rhineland-Palatinate. Most recently, the first

case was also detected in the very north of Baden-Württemberg, just under 15 kilometres from the nearest case in Hesse. However, **Latvia** also recorded a significant increase in the number of cases with 196 detections (previous month: 76). There were also numerous detections in **Poland** (150), **Italy** (83) and **Lithuania** (55), although the number of cases in Italy has halved compared to previous months.

The number of ASF outbreaks in domestic pigs has risen again compared to the previous month. After **Germany** had already reported an outbreak in Hesse at the beginning of July, there were now a total of 8 outbreaks in the same region (Groß-Gerau district) in July. These are fattening farms with animal numbers between seven and almost 1,200 animals. In **Romania**, the number of outbreaks (41) once again increased significantly compared to the previous month (22), as did **Poland** (19), where outbreaks had occurred for the first time in several months in the previous month. **Serbia** reported 21 outbreaks, but additional reports are to be expected. The number of outbreaks is rising in **Ukraine** (14). **Latvia** (1) and **Lithuania** (5) also reported new outbreaks. For the first time since September 2023, there were also ASF outbreaks in **Italy** (6) in domestic pigs in the north of the country.

Outside Europe, there were again numerous outbreaks of ASF in domestic pig holdings in July, particularly in **Vietnam** (69). Further outbreaks were reported in the **Philippines** (6), **Indonesia** (3), **South Korea** (2) and **Bhutan** (1).

On 12 August, Implementing Regulation (EU) 2024/2160 laying down specific control measures for African swine fever (ASF) and amending Annex I 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 **Germany** and **Poland**, as well as new outbreaks of African swine fever in kept porcine animals in **Italy**, **Poland** and **Slovakia**.

Implementing Regulation (EU) 2024/2160 is available at the following link:

http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg_impl/2024/2160/oj

Meat production in Germany increased slightly in the first half of the year

(32/04) According to preliminary results, commercial slaughterhouses produced a total of almost 3.4 million tonnes of meat in Germany in the first half of 2024. The Federal Statistical Office (Destatis) reported that this was an increase of 1.3% compared with the same period a year earlier. In total, around 24 million pigs, cattle, sheep, goats and horses as well as around 344 million chickens, turkeys and ducks were slaughtered in the slaughterhouses. Pork accounts for more than 60% of German meat production. Of this, around 2.10 million tonnes were generated in the first six months of 2024, 1.1% more than in the same period last year. For the first time since 2016, after a steady decline in slaughterings, there was a slight increase in pork production in the first half of the year. Cattle slaughtering also increased in the first half of the year. In total, the slaughterhouses in Germany cut up around 1.5 million cattle. Compared to the same period last year, this represents an increase of 18,300 animals or 1.3%. The volume of beef produced rose by 2.5% to 496,600 tonnes. The average slaughter weight of the cattle was just under 337 kilograms, about 4 kilograms higher than in the same period last year. In the first six months of the year, 344.3 million poultry were slaughtered in Germany. Although the number of slaughtered animals increased only marginally, the amount of poultry meat produced grew by 1.3% to 780,700 tonnes, according to the statisticians.

Turkey ratifies trade agreement with Ukraine

(32/05) Turkey has ratified the free trade agreement with Ukraine. The agreement had already been signed by both sides on 3 February 2022 and received the green light from Ankara at the beginning of August. The first of a total of twelve rounds of negotiations between the two countries had already begun in 2011, accompanied by several expert consultations. According to Turkey's trade minister, the bilateral

trade volume between the two countries reached a total value of \$7.3 billion (€6.7 billion) in 2023. This amount is likely to increase to \$10 billion (€9.2 billion) in the near future as a result of the free trade agreement.

According to media reports, the Turkish trade minister emphasised that the free trade agreement with Turkey will unite all countries bordering the Black Sea, with the exception of Russia, into a single economic area. Turkey has become a de facto hub for Ukrainian grain exports. For example, ships with grain were sent from Turkey to African countries, including 25,000 tons to Nigeria and 15,000 tons to Sudan. Last year, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had lobbied Kremlin boss Vladimir Putin in vain to continue the Black Sea grain agreement. Turkey's geographical location alone makes it an obligatory transit station for grain shipments across the Black Sea.

Argentina has reduced export duties

(32/06) Argentina has reduced the tax burden on domestic agricultural exporters. According to a decree published on 6 August, export duties on fresh, frozen or processed beef were reduced by 2.5 percentage points to 6.5%. No export tax is now levied on fresh, frozen or processed pork. It had previously been 5%. The export duties on dairy products, which were originally between 4.5% and 9.0% and have been suspended in the meantime, were finally abolished by the decree. There were further tariff reductions, for example, for animal fats. The Argentine government stated that one of the goals of the measure was to make agriculture more competitive as an important production sector. Instead of being channelled into the state coffers, the money would now flow into the company's coffers. In addition, animal production in particular should be promoted. This is because it refines the domestic grain, everywhere in Argentina. Animal products could be produced in all parts of the country.

President Javier Milei had been slow to honour his election promise to cut back on export taxes. This had caused resentment in the country. Now the agricultural industry has expressed its satisfaction. Argentine livestock production will benefit from the measure, according to the Argentine Agricultural Industry Council. The industry will export more, produce more and provide more employment.

Audit report Romania

(32/07) The report describes the outcome of an audit of Romania's system of official controls on animals and goods entering the European Union (EU) and verification of compliance of border control posts (BCPs) with EU requirements. The audit was carried out during the period 30 January to 20 February 2024 as part of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety's planned work programme.

The objective of the audit was to evaluate whether

- a) the official controls on animals and goods entering the EU through BCPs were carried out in line with relevant EU legislation, documented procedures and planned arrangements, and that those controls were sufficient to minimise, as far as possible, the introduction of non-compliant consignments and the introduction and subsequent spread of contagious or infectious diseases;
- b) the competent authorities have procedures and/or arrangements in place to ensure the quality, effectiveness and appropriateness of official controls on animals and goods entering the EU, and their impartial and consistent implementation and
- c) the BCPs and inspection centres within those posts (infrastructure, equipment, documentation and staff) are compliant with the applicable requirements of Regulation (EU) 2017/625 (the Official Controls Regulation) and related delegated and implementing regulations.

The audit found that there is a system of official controls in place for animals and goods of animal and non-animal origin entering the Union through BCPs in Romania, which is supported by information tech-

nology systems and cooperation and communication within and between the competent authorities. However, there were significant shortcomings noted in the performance of official controls on goods of animal origin in transit and the minimum frequency rate of physical checks on certain categories of goods of animal origin. Shortcomings were also found related to documented procedures and arrangements in place, the implementation of official controls on certain consignments of animals and goods of non-animal origin, and the compliance of BCPs and the listed control point with minimum requirements for BCPs. These shortcomings collectively undermine the overall effectiveness of official controls to ensure that only compliant consignments of animals and goods enter the EU.

The report makes five recommendations to address the shortcomings identified. It is available under the following link: <https://ec.europa.eu/food/audits-analysis/audit-report/details/4792>

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