

Current information on highly pathogenic avian influenza (Annex)

(50/01) In Lower Saxony, the AI virus H5N1 was confirmed in a broiler farm in the district of Stade in the municipality of Wischhafen on 13 December 2024. The corresponding restricted zones were set up and the killing of the approx. 46,000 animals was ordered.

On 18 December 2024, the EU Commission published Implementing Decision (EU) 2024/3142 in the EU Official Journal L concerning emergency measures in relation to outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza in certain Member States following the recent HPAI outbreaks in Germany (Federal State of Lower Saxony), Croatia (Zagreb County), Italy (Emilia-Romagna, Lombardy and Veneto regions), Hungary (Bács-Kiskun, Békés, Csongrád-Csanád and Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok counties), the Netherlands (Friesland province) and Poland (Lublin Voivodeship). The annex to the decision contains the updated territorial outlines of the protection and surveillance zones as well as the provisional duration of the protection measures. Implementing Decision (EU) 2024/3142 amends Implementing Decision (EU) 2023/2447 accordingly. Implementing Decision (EU) 2024/3142 is available under the following link: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32024D3142>

Enclosed you will find the updated 'HPAI restricted list' as of 18 December 2024, which takes into account the new outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in Germany from July 2022. The changes in this updated version are highlighted in green and relate to the restriction measures imposed by **Hong Kong**. The grey background indicates existing restrictions from the previous AI season that have not yet been lifted by the third country.

According to information from the Federal Ministry of Agriculture (BMEL), this HPAI restriction list, which also contains details of the restrictions, was previously sent to the veterinary authorities of the federal states. It will be updated at short notice in the event of changes. Any remaining trade restrictions from previous AI outbreaks remain unaffected.

Export of animal products from the Federal Republic of Germany to the Republic of Korea - Update of the list of authorised establishments

(50/02) The Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety (BVL) has informed the Korean authorities about the necessary adaptation of the identification marks following the entry into force of Regulation (EU) 2024/1141 amending Annexes II and III to Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 as regards specific hygiene rules for certain meat, fishery products, dairy products and eggs. Against this background, in order to avoid the transmission of numerous amendment notifications concerning the ending European Community (EC) to European Union (EU), the BVL has proposed to the Korean authorities that in future the lists of authorised German establishments should no longer show the identification marks but the approval numbers.

Feedback from the Animal and Plant Quarantine Agency of the Republic of Korea (APQA) is still pending. In response to the BVL's proposal, the Ministry of Food and Drug Safety of the Republic of Korea (MFDS) initially requested an update of the attached list of establishments authorised by MFDS.

A corresponding enquiry was sent to the competent state authorities with a request to check the establishment entries. The feedback should be sent to the BVL, Division 180, by 24 January 2025 in accordance with the official channels. The state authorities will contact the companies.

Committee for the Common Organisation of the Agricultural Markets (Annex)

(50/03) The most recent meeting of the Joint Management Committee for Animal Products took place on Thursday, 12 December 2024. The agenda included the market situation in the egg and poultry sector. We have attached the EU Commission's current presentation on the situation on the poultry market for December to this circular and posted it on the EPEGA website at the following link:

http://intranet.epega.org/meta_downloads/96996/EU_market_situation_poultry_December_2024.pdf

Influenza virus remains infectious for days

(50/04) Influenza or flu viruses can remain infectious in chilled raw milk for up to five days. This has been proven by scientists at Stanford University in California in a recent study. According to the researchers, this finding comes at a time when outbreaks of avian flu in dairy cows have raised concerns about the potential for a new pandemic.

‘This work highlights the potential risk of avian influenza transmission through the consumption of raw milk and the importance of milk pasteurisation,’ the scientists explained. The persistence of the infectious influenza virus in raw milk for days gives cause for concern about possible transmission routes. A virus could contaminate surfaces and other environmental materials in dairy plants and thus pose a risk to animals and humans. After all, unlike pasteurised milk, raw milk is not heated to kill potentially harmful pathogens.

Although avian flu has not yet proven to be dangerous to humans, it could mutate to become so, the researchers said. The recent discovery of bird flu in cattle has already raised questions about its possible transmission through milk and other dairy products. According to the scientists, flu viruses infect more than 40 million people every year in the US alone, with over 50,000 deaths annually. This type of virus can be transmitted from animals to humans, as in the case of swine flu, which led to 1.4 billion infections in humans worldwide between 2009 and 2010.

The scientists investigated the persistence of a strain of the human influenza virus in raw cow's milk at typical refrigeration temperatures. The influenza virus, labelled H1N1 PR8, survived and remained infectious in the milk for up to five days. In addition, the researchers found that the RNA of the flu virus remained detectable in the raw milk for at least 57 days. In comparison, pasteurisation completely destroyed the infectious influenza in the milk and reduced the amount of viral RNA by almost 90%, but did not completely eliminate it.

Schotland to offer vaccine to poultry workers at risk of exposure to avian flu

(50/05) The Scottish NHS is offering a free flu vaccine this winter for people at risk of bird flu. Although the vaccine does not protect against bird flu, it can reduce the risk of a new flu virus developing. This could happen if a person is exposed to the flu and bird flu viruses at the same time.

The vaccine is offered to persons who:

- work in or regularly visit poultry farms and poultry processing plants (including inspection staff)
- cull and/or clean on farms with a confirmed outbreak of avian influenza
- handle live sick birds if avian influenza is suspected

are involved in the collection of wild or domestic poultry carcasses, including seabirds, where avian influenza is suspected.

Expert opinion: Slaughter for food production no longer legitimised today

(50/06) The animal welfare organisation Vier Pfoten (‘Four Paws’) sees opportunities for a legal reassessment of the slaughter of farm animals. As the NGO explained on 18 December 2024 with reference to a current legal opinion prepared on its behalf, the killing of animals for the purpose of food production is no longer necessary today. The reasons for this are vegan meat alternatives and developments in the field of cultured meat.

In the expert opinion, the law firm Rechtsanwälte Günther points out that, according to the legislator, there must be a so-called reasonable cause for killing animals. And this is no longer the case because there is a ‘milder, equally suitable means of producing food’ in the form of cultivated meat, for example. Under these circumstances, the killing of animals for food production is disproportionate. A legal ban should therefore be established.

The lawyers concede that a ban on slaughtering would in fact go hand in hand with an occupational ban for livestock farmers and employees in slaughterhouses. However, they would have to bear the risk that the legal framework conditions change. There would be ‘no far-reaching legal positions’ of the companies to be taken into account. The economic interests had to be countered by effective animal welfare. And this is in the interests of the common good.

Third country lists for imports of poultry products from Brazil and Moldau amended

(50/07) Annex XV to Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/404 as regards the entries for Brazil and Moldova in the lists of third countries from which entry into the Union of consignments of poultry, germinal products of poultry and fresh meat and meat products of poultry and wild feathered game is authorised has been amended. The corresponding Implementing Regulation (EU) 2024/3145 was published in Official Journal L on 19 December 2024.

Annex XV to Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/404 lists the third countries, territories or zones thereof from which consignments of meat products of ungulates, poultry and wild feathered game are authorised to enter the Union. In the description of zone ‘BR-2’ in Brazil in the table in Part 2 of that Annex, reference is made, inter alia, to zones ‘BR-3’ and ‘BR-4’ in Brazil in the table in Part 2 of Annex XIII to that Implementing Regulation. However, following the amendment of Annex XIII to Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/404 by Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2024/1170, zones ‘BR-3’ and ‘BR-4’ in Brazil are no longer listed in the table in Part 2 of Annex XIII to Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/404.

In addition, the entire territory of Moldova is listed in Annex XV to Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/404 as a third country from which consignments of poultry meat products that have undergone a specific risk mitigating treatment ‘D’ in accordance with Annex XXVI to Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/692 are authorised for entry into the Union.

On 21 June 2024, Moldova submitted a request to the Commission to include its zone ‘MD-1’ in Annex XV to Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/404 as a zone from which entry into the Union of consignments of poultry meat products not subject to a specific risk mitigating treatment in accordance with Annex XXVI to Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/692 is permitted.

The Commission has assessed the request submitted by Moldova and has concluded that that in view of the animal health status of zone 'MD-1' in Moldova with regard to relevant listed diseases and in view of the guarantees provided by the competent authority of Moldova as regards compliance or equivalence with the animal health requirements applicable in the Union, that zone could be listed with a non-specific treatment 'A' in column 10 of the table in Part 1, Section A of Annex XV to Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/404 for consignments of poultry meat products entering the Union, which means that the meat products do not need to undergo a specific risk mitigating treatment.

Annex XV of Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/404 has been amended accordingly to take account of developments regarding Brazil and Moldova. Implementing Regulation (EU) 2024/3145 enters into force on 8 January 2025 and is available at the following link:

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32024R3145>

- Restricted list HPAI, status 18 December 2024
- EU market situation poultry, December 2024

Imprint

Editor: European Poultry, Egg and Game Association (EPEGA),

Am Weidendamm 1A, DE 10117 Berlin

Manager: Christine Amling/Sebastian Werren

Tel.: +49 30 590099-562, E-Mail: info@epega.org, Internet: <http://www.epega.org>

The information letter is prepared with the utmost care, but we exclude liability. Reports are confidential and for personal use only.