

## RESOLUTION 3.18

### AVIAN INFLUENZA

---

---

*Concerned* by the recent spread of the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza subtype H5N1 (HPAI) from South-East Asia to Western Asia and Europe,

*Conscious* that HPAI has significant actual or potential implications for agriculture and livelihoods, notably poultry-keeping; human health; the sustainable use of wild birds (especially waterbirds); the conservation of bird species (especially those with small populations and/or which are highly localised); and further, that there may be major economic and social impacts in those areas where migratory birds support the livelihoods of human populations, especially in Africa,

*Mindful* that all currently known cases of human infection with HPAI have been through contact with infected poultry rather than through contact with wild birds,

*Noting also* that the HPAI is considered to have been spread between countries through a number of different vectors including through the movement of poultry, other avian livestock and cage birds and associated activities to service the respective industries; through both the legal and illegal trade in birds; movements of people; and through the migration of waterbirds, although aware that the relative significance of these means of spread varies spatially and temporally,

*Conscious* that recent outbreaks in Turkey, Croatia and Romania more strongly suggest that migratory birds play a role in the transmission of HPAI along flyways,

*Aware* of AEWA's participation in the Scientific Task Force on Avian Influenza convened in late August 2005 by the Convention on Migratory Species, which comprises representatives and observers from nine international organisations, including four UN bodies,

*Acknowledges* the opportunities for information exchange provided by the Special Round-table on the spread of HPAI to be held on 19 November 2005 at Nairobi, Kenya, during the next meeting of the Scientific Council of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), and encourages the participation of all African CMS Scientific Councillors,

*Noting* the major involvement and role in this issue of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), notably through the publication in May 2005 of a *Global Strategy for the Progressive Control of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza*, and its implementation, *inter alia*, through regional programmes of *Emergency Assistance for Early Detection and Prevention of Avian Influenza* and concerned that the Scientific Task Force on Avian Influenza should contribute appropriate expertise to current international initiatives, without duplication of effort,

*Recognising* the particular importance of extensive and long-term data sets relating to bird movements (including ring recovery data), and waterbird counts (notably the International Waterbird Census coordinated by Wetlands International) as an essential information resource that can allow the exploration of possible scenarios of the current HPAI spread including areas of higher relative risk along migratory flyways, and possible policy responses to outbreaks, as well as the important need to support and further develop future monitoring of waterbird populations and assessment of their migratory flyways,

*Welcoming* the major contributions of technical expertise made by Wetlands International to the consideration of these issues, but in this regard also noting the need urgently to analyse relevant data holdings and other information,

*Noting* that development of surveillance schemes and contingency planning will need to be determined nationally, but that there are benefits for co-operation, sharing of information, protocols, capacity, and resources between countries,

*Concerned* that in many countries there is significant lack of information, or misinformation, on important issues related to the spread of HPAI, the risks it may pose, and how to anticipate and respond to outbreaks of HPAI,

*Further concerned* that ill-informed responses may have unfortunate and possibly disastrous long-term consequences for conservation, especially for some of the species which already have small populations and are globally threatened especially those species listed in Column A, Category 1 of Table 1 of the Agreement's Action Plan, and those species listed in Appendix 1 of the Convention on Trade in Endangered Species,

*Recalling* that the Global Flyways Conference (Edinburgh 2004) called, in particular, for urgent action to assess disease risk, and establish monitoring programmes in relation to migratory waterbird movements, the trade of wild birds, and implications for human health,

*Recalling also* that the outbreak of H7N7 in The Netherlands, Belgium and Germany was successfully stamped out in 2003 using rigorous control and biosecurity measures, and further welcomes biosecurity measures being taken in the European Union in response to the most recent outbreaks,

*Noting* that a key objective in responding to HPAI should be that essential genetic resources should in principle remain unaffected.

*The Meeting of the Parties:*

1. *Calls* for urgent responses to the spread of HPAI including the development of national surveillance schemes and contingency planning which should involve measures, which are both immediate, and those, which relate to longer-term needs;
2. *Calls also* for very urgent attention from the international community (including bird ringing schemes such as AFRING) for the support of capacity building within Africa related to the essential need to promote the biosecurity of domesticated poultry as well as the rapid development of surveillance programmes for HPAI in populations of both wild and domesticated birds, and monitoring of the movements of wild birds;
3. *Encourages support* of initiatives by IUCN and Wetlands International for a regional meeting in Africa to enhance monitoring and surveillance mechanisms, and co-operation, related to the need to identify and eliminate HPAI;
4. *Requests* Contracting Parties and urges non-contracting Range States to develop and implement programmes of education and public awareness on HPAI, especially aimed at actually or potentially affected stakeholders, in particular those engaged in outdoor activities and the poultry industry;
5. *Strongly supports* the conclusions of WHO, FAO and OIE that attempts to eliminate HPAI in wild bird populations through lethal responses such as culling is not feasible and should not be attempted, not least since it may exacerbate the problem by causing further dispersion of infected birds;
6. *Emphasises* the need quickly to research and establish the data and analysis required to enable or improve risk assessments by:

- clarifying virus behaviour:
  - i) in different waterbird populations (especially viral incubation periods, the infectious period in birds and the symptoms affecting individual wild birds), as well as determining their survival rates; and
  - ii) in the aquatic habitats which are waterbird breeding, staging and non-breeding (wintering) areas;
- establishing informed assessment of the possibility of transmission from wild populations to domestic flocks, including by non-waterbird species found near poultry-keeping areas;
- clarifying prevalence of HPAI in wild bird populations;
- identifying the nature of migration routes and timings for key migratory waterbirds so as to expand and/or refine existing ecological monitoring of these populations;
- developing a combined risk assessment based on the known behaviour of the virus, risks of transmission, routes and timing of migratory species, as well as known poultry husbandry techniques; and
- improving farming standards and developing strategies to limit the risk of any disease transmission between wild and domestic birds;

7. *Urges* Contracting Parties in their planning and execution of national response strategies to develop fully integrated approaches to address the issues raised by the spread of HPAI that brings together and incorporates virological, epidemiological, medical, ornithological and wildlife management expertise;

8. *Strongly Urges* that Contracting Parties, especially those in Africa, urgently to disseminate this Resolution widely within their administrations, and to relevant agencies, institutions and organisations, such that it may be used for information and as a basis of planning national responses to the potential spread of HPAI;

9. *Requests* that African Contracting Parties and non-contracting Range States co-ordinate their responses to the threats posed by the spread of HPAI through the New Partnership for Africa's Development;

10. *Recommends* that special attention and monitoring by veterinary authorities in those areas holding waterbirds that may have migrated from regions where there have already been outbreaks of HPAI;

11. *Urges* in particular that hunting communities, in the framework of existing hunting activities, contribute to monitoring the spread of HPAI and co-operate actively with national authorities in the event that measures, *inter alia*, special temporary hunting regulations are considered or put into force;

12. *Urges* Contracting Parties, other Range States and international organisations to support research and monitoring related to disease processes in wild bird populations given the potential significance of these in terms of bird conservation and population regulation, so as to be better prepared for the future management of avian disease outbreaks; and

13. *Instructs* the Secretariat to continue to contribute to the Scientific Task Force on Avian Influenza, engaging with relevant expertise within AEWA's Technical Committee and Contracting Parties, and assist the Task Force to disseminate to Contracting Parties, the media and others, clear information and scientific assessments related to the developing situation.