



**Regional response to the
Avian Influenza:
the European Union experience**

**European Commission
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What experience does the EU have on AI? (1)

- **Devastating outbreaks of highly pathogenic AI in Italy (1999/2000) and in NL*, Belgium and Germany in 2003**
- **Outbreaks successfully eradicated in the frame of EU Directive 92/40/EEC**
- **Full transparency on disease situation and continuous exchange of technical information**
- **Rapid decision-making process of the Commission to give a better legal base to the Member States actions**
- **Regionalization / zoning**

What has the EU learned from the lessons of the past?

- **Increased knowledge/experience > “post-crises” reflection**
- **“DIVA vaccination” in certain areas of Italy (end 2000 > ongoing)**
- **Increased precautionary surveillance/control measures (for LPAI) in poultry and other birds**
- **Proposal for a new EU Directive on AI (April 2005) in line with new OIE standards**

How does the EU look at the current AI H5N1 risk?

- High level of awareness on the seriousness of the situation
- Spread by migratory birds: unprecedented situation and major challenge for EU veterinary authorities > risk of major outbreaks in areas with a high density of poultry
- measures taken on the assumption that the whole Europe is at high risk in the next weeks and months (and years?)
- rapid eradication essential to reduce human health risks

What is the EU doing to prevent/rapidly control AI H5N1? (1)

- **Prevention of AI introduction from abroad through imports**
- **Identification of high risk-areas (migratory birds)**
- **Increased surveillance in domestic poultry and wild birds**
- **Increased bio-security in poultry farms**

What is the EU doing to prevent/rapidly control AI H5N1? (2)

- Member States contingency plans (review, inspections, simulation exercises)
- Special measures (including vaccination) for zoo birds
- Strengthening co-ordination between laboratories and AI research
- Improved collaboration vets - public health authorities to ensure better protection of people that could be directly exposed to infected poultry/birds

Can the EU technical experience be useful for other regions in the world?

- **Networking of laboratories**
- **Fora for exchange of information and coordination of actions between countries**
- **Contingency planning**
- **Quality of veterinary services**

CONCLUSIONS

- There is a high level of preparedness in the EU for AI H5N1
- Confidence that the measures being taken would successfully limit the possible spread of AI H5N1 by migratory birds in the EU and thus reducing to a minimum the potential risk for public health
- The EU experience could be considered in other areas of the world for the establishment of coordinated regional strategies