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## Self-declaration of the recovery of country freedom from infection with high pathogenicity avian influenza viruses (HPAI) by Denmark

**Declaration sent to the OIE on 8 March 2022 by Dr Charlotte Vilstrup, OIE Delegate for Denmark, Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries.**

### 1. Introduction

The objective of the declaration is the recovery of self-declared freedom from infection with high pathogenicity avian influenza viruses (HPAI) in accordance with the provisions of Article 10.4.6. of the OIE *Terrestrial Animal Health Code (Terrestrial Code)*. The self-declaration covers the whole country and describes 7 outbreaks of HPAI in poultry reported since 1 August 2021.

The starting date of the self-declaration is 16 March 2022.

### 2. Avian influenza situation in Denmark

On 12 August 2021, Denmark regained its status as a country free from HPAI according to the *Terrestrial Code*. The status was maintained until 1 November 2021, when an outbreak of HPAI subtype H5N1 was confirmed in a turkey holding. The outbreak was the first in Danish poultry since 5 July 2021.

On 22 October 2021, Denmark confirmed influenza A viruses of high pathogenicity in birds other than poultry. This was the first detection of influenza A viruses of high pathogenicity in birds other than poultry since May 2021. The disease was detected in wild birds from the Wadden sea in the south-western part of Denmark. Since then, the disease has been detected in several wild birds and also in three holdings with birds other than poultry in Denmark.

Danish Veterinary and Food Administration (DVFA) assume that this new HPAI epidemic has been caused by migratory birds.

## Details of the outbreak in poultry

On 1 November 2021, an outbreak of HPAI subtype H5N1 was confirmed in a turkey holding with approximately 27,600 turkeys near the town Sønderupsønder in municipality of Slagelse. A suspicion of avian influenza was raised due to clinical symptoms.

A holding consisting of approximately 6,000 game birds, mainly pheasants and ducks, in Tjele in the municipality of Viborg was found infected with HPAI subtype H5N1 on 19 December 2021.

An additional small holding of 42 hens, ducks and geese in Skaverup in the municipality of Vordingborg was confirmed positive with HPAI subtype H5N1 on 31 December 2021.

Further two turkey holdings with approximately 36,000 and 60,000 turkeys near Stokkemærke in the municipality of Lolland and Ruds-Vedby in the municipality of Sorø were found to be infected with the HPAI subtype H5N1 on 1 and 3 January 2022.

A holding consisting of approximately 100,000 laying hens near Stoholm in the municipality of Viborg was found to be infected with another strain of HPAI. The samples from this holding were positive with HPAI subtype H5N8 and the outbreak was confirmed on 7 January 2022.

Finally, a holding consisting of approximately 800 laying hens near Søtofte in the municipality of Holbæk was found to be infected with HPAI subtype H5N1. The outbreak was confirmed on 11 February 2022.

All poultry were immediately culled, and the carcasses were disposed by rendering. Cleaning and disinfection of buildings, equipment, vehicles etc. were started immediately after the culling.

The Danish Veterinary and Food Administration established zones of 3 and 10 km around the infected holdings and implemented the necessary measures to prevent spread of infection from the affected holdings.

The outbreaks were detected by PCR followed by sequencing at [Statens Serum Institute](#) (The Danish National Reference Laboratory). Sampling and diagnostics were performed in accordance with [diagnostic protocols of the European Union Reference Laboratory \(EURL\) for Avian Influenza and Newcastle Disease](#) and Chapter 3.3.4 of the *Manual of Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines for Terrestrial Animals (Terrestrial Manual)*.

The epidemiological investigation concluded that the most likely source of disease introduction into the holdings was contact with wild birds.

The outbreaks were reported to the OIE via World Animal Health Information System (OIE-WAHIS).

An overview of the outbreaks can be seen in table 1.

Outbreak no.	OIE-WAHIS report ID	OIE-WAHIS outbreak no.	Municipality	Confirmation of HPAI, date	Virus type	Suspicion type	Susceptible Birds, no	Category	Holding type	Approval of cleaning and disinfection, date
1	IN_152267	Ob_92111	Slagelse	01.11.2021	H5N1	Clinic	27,600	Poultry	Slaughter turkey	06.11. 2021
2	IN_153038	Ob_94232	Viborg	19.12.2021	H5N1	Clinic	6,000	Poultry	Pheasants and ducks	23.12.2021
3	FUR_153313	Ob_94921	Vordingborg	31.12.2021	H5N1	Clinic	42	Poultry	Hens, ducks and geese	02.01.2022
4	FUR_153313	Ob_94922	Lolland	01.01.2022	H5N1	Clinic	36,000	Poultry	Slaughter turkeys	07.01.2022

5	FUR_153313	Ob_94923	Sorø	03.01.2022	H5N1	Clinic	60,000	Poultry	Slaughter turkeys	11.01.2022
6	IN_153455	Ob_95402	Viborg	07.01.2022	H5N8	Clinic	100,000	Poultry	Laying hens	11.01.2022
7	IN_154054	Ob_97352	Holbæk	11.02.2022	H5N1	Clinic	800	Poultry	Laying hens	13.02.2022

### 3. Control and eradication measures HPAI

Avian influenza H5/H7 is notifiable in Denmark according to national legislation: [Order no. 1171 of 17.07.2021 on lists of infectious diseases for the act on the keeping of animals](#) Veterinarians and farmers are obligated to notify DVFA immediately upon observation of clinical signs of avian influenza.

The suspected holdings were put under official movement restrictions during the suspicion period.

The Danish contingency plans comprise an overall eradication strategy, tools for eradication, a crisis organization and a crisis communication plan. This plan was followed during the outbreaks in order to achieve a quick and professional handling of the outbreaks.

#### Measures at the infected holdings:

- All poultry were immediately culled, and the carcasses were disposed by rendering.
- Cleaning and disinfection of buildings, equipment, vehicles etc. was started immediately after culling.
- An epidemiological investigation was conducted.
- All contacts were traced and investigated.

#### Strengthened biosecurity measures in general due to the HPAI epidemic

Please see section 5. Measures implemented to maintain freedom

#### Stamping out policy:

Denmark has handled the HPAI outbreaks according to Regulation (EU) 2020/687 and has culled all the poultry at the infected holdings. The cleaning and disinfection was approved by the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration on the dates stated in table 1.

#### Restriction zones

After HPAI confirmation, the DVFA established a 3 km protection zone and a 10 km surveillance zone around the infected holding and implemented the necessary measures in accordance with [Council Regulation \(EU\) 2020/687](#).

#### Screening in the zones

##### Protection zone:

All poultry holdings in the protection zone (including hobby holdings) were visited by an official veterinarian from the DVFA, who performed a clinical examination of the poultry. If information from the owner or the examination indicate that infection or contact with infected birds had taken place samples were collected for laboratory examination in order to confirm or rule out the presence of avian influenza virus. All holdings with ducks/geese were sampled regardless of their clinical status.

Sampling: 20 tracheal swabs and 20 cloacal swabs from 40 animals. In case of less animals, all animals were tested.

#### Surveillance zone:

According to article 41 in Council Regulation (EU) 2020/687 a sample of poultry holdings need to be visited by an official veterinarian from the DVFA, who will perform a clinical examination of the poultry. If e.g. information from the owner or the examination indicate that infection or contact with infected birds had taken place samples were collected for laboratory examination in order to confirm or rule out the presence of avian influenza virus. The criteria used for the determination of how many and which holdings to be included in the sample are as follows:

- 1) All holdings with more than 50 birds
- 2) All holdings with ducks/geese – here samples are taken regardless of their clinical status or size.
- 3) If the number of holdings under point 1 and 2 amounts to less than 20 % of all holdings with birds in the surveillance zone, additional holdings with less than 50 birds will be chosen by the Regional Veterinary and Food Control Unit and included in the sample.

Sampling: 20 tracheal swabs and 20 cloacal swabs from 40 animals. In case of less animals, all animals were tested.

The results of the screening in the zones can be seen in table 2.a. and 2.b below.

Table 2.a. Results of the screening in the protection zone					
Outbreak no	Zone	Total no. of holdings	Number of holdings visited	Number of holdings tested	Number of positive holdings
1	Sønderupsønder/Slagelse	7	7	0	0
2	Tjele/Viborg	10	10	0	0
3	Skaverup/ Vordingborg	0	0	0	0
4	Stokkemarke/ Lolland	9	9	0	0
5	Ruds Vedby/Sorø	22	22	3	0
6	Stoholm/Viborg	3	3	0	0
7	Søtofte/Holbæk	7	7	2	0
total		58	58	5	0

Table 2.b. Results of the screening in the surveillance zone					
Outbreak number	Zone	Total no. of holdings	Number of holdings visited	Number of holdings tested	Number of positive holdings
1	Sønderupsønder/Slagelse	39	9	5	0
2	Tjele/Viborg	16	9	1	0
3	Skaverup/ Vordingborg	15	7	0	0
4	Stokkemarke/ Lolland	15	7	2	0
5	Ruds Vedby/Sorø	48	18	5	0
6	Stoholm/Viborg	18	7	0	0
7	Søtofte/Holbæk	70	25	8	0
Total		221	82	21	0

#### 4. Surveillance and early warning system

##### Poultry

Avian influenza is notifiable in Denmark according to national legislation: [Order no. 1171 of 17.07.2021 on lists of infectious diseases for the act on the keeping of animals](#), Veterinarians and farmers are obligated to notify the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration immediately upon observation of clinical signs of avian influenza.

Apart from passive surveillance, Denmark has a comprehensive active risk-based surveillance programme for avian influenza in accordance with Articles 10.4.26. to 10.4.30. and Chapter 1.4. of the *Terrestrial Code*.

According to national legislation: [Order no. 1456 of 12.12.2019 on the requisite of surveillance of Avian influenza in poultry and farmed game birds](#) all commercial holdings in the target group having more than 100 animals are included in the programme. Breeder hens (central rearing flocks) and pullets are tested before release to egg production, outdoor layers four times a year and outdoor slaughter poultry (broilers, ducks and geese) before slaughter. In addition, fattening turkeys are tested before slaughter. Breeder ducks and geese are required to be tested once a year.

Farmed game birds for restocking (gallinaceous birds and waterfowl) are tested four times during the production season. Breeding animals undergo serological testing, and their offspring virological testing.

When traded, poultry and game birds have to be accompanied by a certificate stating that the flock of origin has been tested negative for avian influenza within the preceding three and two months, respectively.

This surveillance programme is mainly based on serology. PCR testing is used only for offspring from gamebirds. Additionally, PCR testing is used in case of a positive serological result to confirm whether the relevant flock is infected by a virus. All laboratory testing is carried out at Statens Serum Institute (National Reference Laboratory).

The result of the Danish avian influenza surveillance in poultry and game birds for restocking August 2021–February 2022 is available in table 3 below.

Table 3. Results of the active Danish surveillance programme for avian influenza in poultry. 1. August 2021 – 28. February 2022					
Poultry category	Holdings (h)/flocks (f) in Denmark <sup>1</sup>	Holdings (h)/flocks (f) tested <sup>2</sup>	Serologically positive holdings/flocks (H5, H7)		
			H5	H7	H5 and H7
Chicken breeders	191 (f)	79 (f)	0	0	0
Free-range laying hens	162 (f)	113 (f)	0	0	0
Free-range broilers	66 (h)	16 (h)	0	0	0
Fattening turkeys	35 (h)	13 (f)	0	0	0
Fattening geese	4 (h)	1 (h)	0	0	0
Fattening ducks	41 (h)	7 (h)	0	0	0
Total positives	-	-	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

<sup>1</sup> All holdings/flocks with more than 100 animals are registered. The holdings/flocks do not necessarily have active production throughout the year.

<sup>2</sup> Some flocks/holdings are tested more than once a year; the figures only include one annual testing per flock/holding.

Source: The Poultry Database of the Danish Agriculture & Food Council, 2022.

Furthermore, the results of the Danish surveillance can also be seen on the EU website [https://ec.europa.eu/food/animals/animal-diseases/control-measures/avian-influenza\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/food/animals/animal-diseases/control-measures/avian-influenza_en)

From 1 February 2022, the active surveillance programme was changed and aligned in accordance with the EU-legislation. The new [Danish Order No 148 of 28 January 2022](#) repeals the Order No 1456 and is valid from 1 February 2022.

The new active surveillance programme in poultry is risk based and includes poultry species that do generally not display significant signs when infected with HPAI:

- breeding ducks
- breeding geese

- fattening ducks
- fattening geese
- quails
- Farmed game birds for restocking belonging to *Anseriformes*

All holdings with more than 100 animals in the target group are included in the programme. The animals are tested virologically. Ten tracheal and ten cloacal swap samples are taken from each holding from ten birds. The samples are analysed using RT-PCR.

Fattening ducks and geese are tested before slaughter. Breeder ducks and geese are tested once a year.

Farmed game birds for restocking are tested four times during the production season. Breeding animals are tested before laying and offspring three times during the season. All target animals have to be tested within 2 months before movement.

The testing has to be done at an approved laboratory.

No data from this surveillance is available yet.

### Early warning

As a supplement to the surveillance in poultry a special programme for early warning of AI in commercial poultry and hobby poultry has been in place since 2005.

The AI early warning parameters requiring the owner of the animals to notify are:

- Drop in feed and water intake by more than 20% in 24 hours.
- Drop in egg production by more than 5% for more than two consecutive days.
- Mortality rate higher than 3% in any unit during a three-day period.

Early warnings are notified to the DVFA, and samples are collected from ten birds of the flock for virological (PCR) examination.

### Wild birds

Since January 2011, the surveillance programme for avian influenza in wild birds has been divided into an EU-coordinated passive surveillance programme for HPAI in wild birds found dead or sick and a national active surveillance for AI in live birds with an increased risk of exposure to AI and hunted game birds. Birds sourced from passive surveillance are tested individually, and birds sourced from active surveillance are tested by cloacal swabs in pools taken from up to five birds of the same species at the same time and location.

Table 4 presents the results of the surveillance in wild birds in 2021. The monitoring of dead wild birds covered the whole country.

Table 4: Results of the Danish surveillance programme for avian influenza in wild birds, 1. August 2021 - 28. February 2022

	Passive surveillance (dead or sick wild birds)	Active surveillance (live wild birds)
<b>Birds sampled</b>	215	1015
<b>Samples/pools</b>	430 samples	234 pools <sup>1</sup>
<b>Influenza A-positive birds</b>	103	62 pools <sup>2</sup>

<b>LPAI H5-positive birds</b>	1	1 pools <sup>2</sup>
<b>LPAI H7-positive birds</b>	0	0 pool <sup>2</sup>
<b>HPAI H5/H7-positive birds</b>	95	9 individual birds and 1 pool of 10 droppings

<sup>1</sup> Pools of cloacal swabs taken from up to five birds of the same species at the same time and location, except for 30 samples that were pools of 10 fresh droppings from birds of the same species, taken at the same time and location.

<sup>2</sup> The actual number of positive birds is not known. If a pool is positive, at least one of the pooled birds is positive.

Source: Danish Veterinary Consortium, 2022.

Results of the passive surveillance programme in wild birds for the past years are available on this website: <https://ai.fvst.dk> (Click on “undersøgte fugle”).

## 5. Measures implemented to maintain freedom

The DVFA followed a pre-determined strategy for the implementation of measures in case of an HPAI epidemic. Following a rapid risk assessment performed after findings of HPAI subtype H5N1 in several wild birds from the Wadden sea, the risk level for HPAI introduction from wild birds was raised from low to high.

Consequently, a compulsory housing order was introduced on 1 November 2021 ([Danish Order No 1996 of 1 November 2021](#)), requiring all poultry and other captive birds to be housed indoor or confined under roof, net or wire to protect the poultry from contact with wild birds. The housing order applies to the whole country and to all categories of poultry and other captive birds with certain exemptions for animal welfare reasons. In addition, fairs, markets, shows or other gatherings of poultry or other captive birds are prohibited across the country.

The DVFA continuously informs the public and stakeholders about the AI situation in wild birds using press releases, news and facts updated on the DVFA homepage.

DVFA uses the app for smartphones called “FugleinfluenzaTip” (“Bird flu Tip”) in order to make it easier for the public to notify the DVFA in case of findings of dead wild birds. This app allows citizens to send exact data about findings of dead wild birds including the location and a photo. The submitted data are directly transferred to the DVFA wild bird database and allocated for collection by the Veterinary Inspection Units. The avian influenza situation in wild birds can be followed on the [Danish avian influenza database](#).

Imports of poultry and poultry meat products for human consumption or as animal by-products (ABP) are only accepted from countries outside the EU, if they are listed in EU Regulation 2021/404, Annexes V, XIV and XV, which ensures that the countries fulfil the animal health requirements set out in the EU Animal Health Law, Regulation 2016/429. Regarding intercommunity trade Animal Health Law, Regulation 2016/429. This in turn ensures that they are in accordance with Articles 10.4.7. to 10.4.22 of the *Terrestrial Code*.

Intercommunity trade between member states of the EU of poultry and poultry meat products for human consumption or as animal by-products (ABP) are done accordance with EU Regulation 2020/688, EU regulation 853/2004, EU Regulation 1069/2009 and EU Regulation 142/2011. This in turn ensures that the trade is in accordance with Articles 10.4.7. to 10.4.22. of the *Terrestrial Code*.

## 6. Conclusion

Considering that:

- All the outbreaks of high pathogenicity avian influenza in poultry have been handled in accordance with Council Regulation (EU) 2020/687 and the Danish contingency plan for avian influenza;
- Stamping out measures were adopted including cleaning and disinfection of the infected holdings. The cleaning and disinfection were approved by the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration on the dates specified in

table 1 (the last cleaning and disinfection was approved by the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration on 13 February 2022);

- 28 days have elapsed since the end of the cleaning and disinfection approval of the last outbreak in accordance with Article 10.4.6. of the *Terrestrial Code* adopted on 28 May 2021;
- Surveillance has been carried out in accordance with Articles 10.4.26. to 10.4.30. of the OIE *Terrestrial Code* adopted on 28 May 2021;
- There are regular ongoing awareness programs in place on avian influenza to encourage prompt reporting of HPAI suspicions.

**The OIE Delegate of Denmark declares that the country complies with the requirements for a country free from infection with high pathogenicity avian influenza viruses (HPAI) in poultry as of 16 March 2022, in compliance with the provisions of Chapter 1.6. and Article 10.4.6. of the *Terrestrial Code* and consistent with the information provided in OIE-WAHIS.**

Statement to be included in the self-declaration document.

I, the undersigned, Dr. Charlotte Vilstrup

Delegate of Denmark

to the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), takes responsibility for the self-declaration of freedom from

High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza in accordance with the provisions of Chapter

10.4 of the Terrestrial Animal Health Code (disease)

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Drawn up on 08/03/2022.

Signature of the Delegate: Dr. Charlotte Vilstrup