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

Declaration sent to OIE on 25 May 2022 by Dr Susana Guedes Pombo, OIE Delegate for Portugal, General Directorate for Food and Veterinary, Ministry of Agriculture and Food.

Introduction

The objective of this self-declaration is to officially declare Portugal as a country free from infection with high pathogenicity avian influenza viruses (HPAI), in accordance with Chapter 10.4. Infection with High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza viruses and Article 1.6.3. Procedures for Publication by the OIE of a self-declaration of animal health status by a Member Country, of the *Terrestrial Animal Health Code (Terrestrial Code)*.

This declaration describes seven outbreaks of HPAI subtype H5N1 in poultry and seven outbreaks of Influenza A viruses of high pathogenicity in captive birds in Portugal which occurred between 30 November 2021 and 16 April 2022.

Portugal formally requests the OIE to publish this self-declaration of country freedom from high pathogenicity avian influenza. The start date of the self-declaration is 22 April 2022. A statement of responsibility for this self-declaration is contained in Annex I.

1. Avian Influenza situation in Portugal

Avian Influenza is a notifiable disease as per article 5 of [Decree-law nº 110/2007](#), of 16 April 2007, and article 18 of [Regulation \(EU\) n.º 2016/429](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 March 2016. This legal obligation is also included in [Edict nº 19](#) of HPAI as determined by the General Directorate of Food and Veterinary (DGAV).

From 2014 until the end of November 2021, no outbreaks of HPAI were detected in poultry and other kept birds (hobby flocks).

On 30 November 2021, the first outbreak of HPAI H5N1 was confirmed in a hobby flock of chickens, turkeys, ducks and geese located in Palmela municipality, Setúbal district. These were free range birds, and the most likely origin of infection was contact with wild birds. Subsequently, 13 more outbreaks of HPAI were detected in kept birds: 7 in commercial poultry farms and 6 hobby flocks. Details of these outbreaks are shown in table 1.

Table 1 – Outbreaks of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in domestic birds in Portugal, from November 2021 to March 2022

Outbreak n°	OIE-WAHIS report ID	OIE-WAHIS outbreak n°	Municipality	HPAI confirmation date	Virus subtype	Suspicion type	N° susceptible birds	Category	Holding type	Final cleaning and disinfection completion date
1/GAAP	IN_152790	ob_93527	Palmela	30/11/2021	H5N1	Clinical	79	Captive birds	Hobby flock	06/12/2021
2/GAAP	IN_153147	ob_94554	Óbidos	23/12/2021	H5N1	Clinical	18100	Poultry	Fattening turkeys	31/01/2022
3/GAAP	IN_153245	ob_94738	Vila Nova da Barquinha	30/12/2021	H5N1	Clinical	7353	Poultry	Fattening turkeys	31/01/2022
4/GAAP	IN_153302	ob_944883	Santiago do Cacém	03/01/2022	H5N1	Clinical	60	Captive birds	Hobby flock	05/02/2022
3C/GAAP	FUR_153546	ob_95611	Constância	14/01/2022	H5N1	Clinical	95	Captive birds	Hobby flock	15/02/2022
7/GAAP	FUR_153885	ob_96549	Torres Vedras	04/02/2022	H5N1	Clinical	12242	Poultry	Fattening turkeys and free range broilers	10/03/2022
7B/GAAP	FUR_154014	ob_97211	Torres Vedras	08/02/2022	H5N1	Clinical	61112	Poultry	Chicken breeders	20/03/2022
7C/GAAP	FUR_154059	ob_97378	Torres Vedras	10/02/2022	H5N1	Clinical	31414	Poultry	Chicken breeders	20/03/2022
7D/GAAP	FUR_154150	ob_97614	Torres Vedras	14/02/2022	H5N1	Clinical	12414	Poultry	Breeding ducks	21/03/2022
7E/GAAP	FUR_154266	ob_97971	Torres Vedras	19/02/2022	H5N1	Clinical	85500	Poultry	Breeding ducks	25/03/2022
8/GAAP	FUR_154211	ob_97863	Mértola	18/02/2022	H5N1	Clinical	26	Captive birds	Hobby flock	22/03/2022
10/GAAP	FUR_154461	ob_98598	Ferreira do Alentejo	28/02/2022	H5N1	Clinical	13	Captive birds	Hobby flock	01/04/2022
11/GAAP	FUR_154461	ob_98602	Vila do Conde	03/03/2022	H5N1	Clinical	60	Captive birds	Hobby flock	03/04/2022
13/GAAP	FUR_154552	ob_98985	Castro Marim	15/03/2022	H5N1	Clinical	53	Captive birds	Hobby flock	16/04/2022

A map of the location of the outbreaks is shown in annex II.

All outbreaks were confirmed by Real-Time Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) and gene sequencing by INIAV, I.P., which is the National Reference Laboratory for Animal Health (NRL).

Epidemiological investigations concluded that direct or indirect contact with wild birds was the probable source of infection for most outbreaks. All the farms affected in the municipality of Torres Vedras belonged to the same poultry production company and infection may have been disseminated through movements of staff and vehicles. However, the first outbreak of this cluster was confirmed in a farm where a significant number of wild birds had been present on the area surrounding the poultry houses.

2. Control and eradication measures in response to avian influenza outbreaks

In all outbreaks, following notification of HPAI clinical suspicion, official veterinarians of the General Directorate for Food and Veterinary (DGAV) local services carried out visits to the suspected holdings for clinical inspection, sampling and placing holdings under official surveillance. Samples were immediately delivered to the NRL and analytic results were available within the first 24 hours after sampling.

Upon each confirmation, DGAV issued an Edict determining reinforced biosecurity measures, namely mandatory confinement of all kept birds in mainland Portugal, as well restrictions to be enforced in the protection and surveillance zones. Simultaneously, control and eradication measures foreseen in [Commission Delegated](#)

[Regulation \(EU\) n.º 2020/687](#) were carried out by teams of official veterinarians, or under their supervision, including:

- Quarantine and updated epidemiological enquiry;
- Stamping out;
- Disposal of carcasses, by-products (manure) and waste according to Regulation (EC) n° 2009/1069 of the European Parliament and of the Council;
- Cleaning and disinfection of premises, vehicles, equipment and other contaminated objects;
- Tracing and recall of poultry products – meat and incubation eggs;
- Implementation of restriction zones:
 - Protection zone – area within a circle of a 3 km radius centred on the infected premises;
 - Surveillance zone - area within a circle of a 10 km radius centred on the infected premises.

Within these restriction zones the following measures were implemented:

- Inventory of all poultry holdings;
- All holdings were visited by official veterinarians for clinical examination of the poultry and other captive birds.
- Reinforced surveillance within restriction zones:
 - Sampling for HPAI virus screening of all flocks kept within protection zone and of epidemiologically related flocks;
 - Sampling for HPAI virus screening before movements authorised under granted derogations.
- Movement restrictions and prohibitions:
 - No poultry or other captive birds as well as eggs, for incubation or consumption, may enter or leave a holding without authorisation granted by DGAV;
 - Removal or spreading of used litter, manure or slurry from holdings is prohibited. Removal of manure and used litter may be carried out when authorised by DGAV;
 - Transport of poultry meat from slaughterhouses, cutting plants and cold stores is prohibited unless authorised by DGAV;
 - Fairs, markets, shows or other gatherings of poultry or other captive birds are prohibited.
 - Release of poultry for game birds restocking is prohibited.
- Reinforced biosecurity measures:
 - Preventing contacts with wild birds;
 - Entrance of staff and visitors only when strictly necessary;
 - Records of each visit must be kept by holdings;
 - All staff and visitors entering or leaving poultry holdings must strictly follow disinfection procedures;
 - All parts of vehicles entering or leaving poultry holdings must be cleaned and disinfected;
 - Dead birds (normal daily mortality) must be promptly disposed according to Regulation (EC) n° 1069/2009;
 - All vehicles and equipment used for transporting live poultry or other captive birds, meat, feed, manure, slurry and bedding and any other material or substances likely to be contaminated are cleaned and disinfected after each transport and allowed to completely dry before any subsequent use.

Measures within the protection zone were lifted 21 days after conclusion of cleaning and disinfection of the infected holdings. At the end of this period, protection zone was included in the surveillance zone for further 9 days.

3. Results of the reinforced surveillance within restriction zones

The results of reinforced surveillance within restriction zones are shown in table 2.

Table 2 – Results of testing for High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza (30 November 2021 to 22 April 2022)

Surveillance type	N° of tested holdings	N° of tested birds	N° positive holdings
Clinical suspicions	32	479	8
Protection zone	69	1975	5*
Surveillance zone	41	1309	1*
Total	142	3763	14

*Clinical suspicions in farms located within protection and surveillance zones
All testing carried out in healthy poultry was negative.

4. Surveillance programme and early warning system in poultry

Portugal has been carrying out an avian influenza surveillance programme, including in poultry and wild birds, since 2003. This programme includes both active and passive surveillance according to rules foreseen in annex II to [Commission Delegated Regulation \(EU\) n.º2020/689](#) and in compliance with Chapter 1.4. and Articles 10.4.26. to 10.4.30. of the *Terrestrial Code*.

Poultry surveillance includes an early warning system, that is, notification and clinical as well as laboratory investigation of all disease suspicions and active surveillance. Until the end of 2021, poultry active surveillance was carried out according to annex I to Commission Decision n.º. 2010/367 and was based on a representative sampling of holdings keeping the following poultry species and categories: chicken breeders, laying hens, free range laying hens, free range broilers, fattening turkeys, duck breeders, fattening ducks, ratites, gallinaceous game birds, waterfowl game birds and backyards flocks. Under this programme, chicken breeders, laying hens, free range laying hens and duck breeders were screened, by ELISA, twice a year and fattening ducks farms were tested two to three times a year, also by ELISA. Fattening turkeys and free-range broilers were screened by ELISA once a year and game birds, ratites and backyards flocks were tested, by RT-PCR, once a year. Programme's results for the last five years are shown on table 3.

Table 3 – Results of the annual surveillance of HPAI in domestic birds

N° establishments tested by active surveillance	2017		2018		2019		2020		2021		Total	
	negative	positive	negative	positive								
Chicken breeders	44	0	44	0	42	0	41	0	41	0	212	0
Laying hens (including free range LH)	76	0	80	0	82	0	95	0	91	0	424	0
Free range broilers	62	0	62	0	61	0	31	0	53	0	269	0
Fattening turkeys	63	0	61	0	63	0	50	0	62	0	299	0
Ducks - Breeders and fattening	15	0	16	0	14	0	13	0	17	0	75	0
Ratites	8	0	7	0	3	0	3	0	3	0	24	0
Game birds - gallinaceous and waterfowl	44	0	37	0	31	0	29	0	32	0	173	0
Backyard flocks	70	0	63	0	54	0	41	0	58	0	286	0
Total	382	0	370	0	350	0	303	0	357	0	1762	0

Since January 2022, HPAI surveillance is risk based as foreseen in annex II to Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) n.º 2020/689 and the objectives of the programme are:

- Early detection of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in poultry;
- Early detection of HPAI in wild birds;
- Detection of HPAI in poultry species which generally do not show significant clinical signs;

- Detection of circulating low pathogenic avian influenza viruses (LPAIV) that may easily spread between poultry flocks in particular in areas with a high density of poultry establishments in view of their potential to mutate to HPAI in order to:
 - (a) identify clusters of infection with LPAIV; and
 - (b) monitor the risk of spread of LPAIV by movements of poultry and by fomites in certain production systems at risk.
- Contribution to increased knowledge on HPAI and LPAIV posing a potential zoonotic risk.

Since, as stated above, avian influenza is a notifiable disease, all suspicions of disease are within the scope of early detection of HPAI in poultry. The reporting of any sudden mortality increases in flocks or changes in production pattern, namely egg drop or marked decrease in feed and water consumption, is mandatory. Such reports are then thoroughly investigated by local veterinary services, including sampling, according to EFSA's recommendations, for avian influenza virus screening by RT-PCR. This sampling includes at least 5 dead birds and 20 oropharyngeal swabs as well as 20 cloacal swabs. In case of absence of mortality, only the swabs will be collected.

Under the new legislation, active surveillance is risk based and, therefore, all poultry holdings, keeping relevant poultry species and categories, located within areas of higher risk for avian influenza virus introduction are tested. Active surveillance is also carried out in the remaining Portuguese territory, namely in high poultry density areas, based on a representative sampling of poultry farms and considering an estimated prevalence of 5% and 95% CI or 99% CI, for Galliformes and Anseriformes, respectively.

In this new risk-based programme, the following poultry categories are included: breeding ducks, fattening ducks, waterfowl game birds, quails, laying hens, free range laying hens, fattening turkeys and gallinaceous game birds. All poultry will be tested by RT-PCR, except laying hens, including free range, and fattening turkeys which will be screened by serology (ELISA). Frequency of sampling will as follows:

- Laying hens (including free range) – twice a year;
- Fattening turkeys – once a year;
- Galliformes game birds - once a year;
- Duck breeders - twice a year;
- Fattening ducks – 2 to 3 times a year;
- Waterfowl game birds – twice a year.

All sampling is carried out by official veterinarians, either at poultry farms or at slaughterhouses when flocks are slaughtered.

5. Wild bird surveillance

Early detection of HPAI virus circulation among wild bird populations is included in the avian influenza surveillance programme.

The collection of samples from wild birds is performed mostly by official veterinarians of the local veterinary services, field workers of the Institute for Nature Conservation and Forestry, IP (ICNF), by special brigades of the National Republican Guard and Police Force and by the municipality veterinarians. Nature conservation organizations, bird ringing teams, hunters and ornithologists may also collaborate in the sample collection.

All mass mortality events of wild birds have to be notified to DGAV, either at central or local level. Personnel of the organizations involved (please see above) regularly carry out routine rounds in protected natural areas and in rural areas where dead wild birds can be found. Also, wounded, diseased and or dead wild birds entering wild bird rescue centres can be sampled.

Upon detection of dead or injured wild birds, local veterinary services are contacted, and sampling is carried out by official veterinarians. These samples are, either the whole dead wild bird, or oropharyngeal and cloacal swabs. The local services are responsible for the delivery of samples to the NRL, where testing by RT-PCR is performed.

Recently, DGAV and ICNF developed an application for the reporting of dead wild animals, called ANIMAS, accessible to the public at <https://animas.icnf.pt/>. Reports registered by the public on ANIMAS, including dead wild birds, are subsequently evaluated by DGAV and, if necessary, sampling of these birds is carried out by official veterinarians.

Until January 2022, only one case of HPAI infection in wild birds had been detected in Portugal: a grey heron (*Ardea cinerea*), found dead at Loulé, Algarve in January 2017 which tested positive for H5N8.

In 2022, the first outbreak of H5N1 HPAI in wild birds was confirmed in ducks (*Cairina moschata*) in Vila Nova da Barquinha on 10 January. Since then, five additional outbreaks in wild birds were detected and outbreaks details are shown in Annex III.

A map of the location of the outbreaks is shown in Annex IV.

Besides these outbreaks, between 1 December 2021 and 24 May 2022, 166 wild birds, corresponding to 282 samples, were tested, by RT-PCR, under the avian surveillance programme as shown in Annex V.

6. Measures implemented to maintain freedom

Apart from enforcing national and European legislation and after risk assessment, additional measures, including biosecurity procedures, aimed at preventing outbreaks of avian influenza in poultry and other kept birds are determined by DGAV through publication of Edicts and Notices. Currently [Edict nº19](#) and [Notice nº 18](#) are in force.

Furthermore, an [avian influenza dedicated page on DGAV webportal](#) containing relevant information for stakeholders and the public is continuously updated and, in case of confirmation of outbreaks, press releases and edicts are also publicised on DGAV main webpage.

Regular information and awareness meetings with poultry industry stakeholders are also carried out, with an emphasis on HPAI preventive measures and a [Biosecurity Manual for Poultry Holdings](#) was developed by poultry industry associations in collaboration with DGAV.

All imports of poultry, poultry products and by-products are carried out according to provisions of Chapter 10.4. of the *Terrestrial Code* as well as according to [Commission Delegated Regulation nº 692/2020](#) and [Commission Implementing Regulation nº 2021/404](#). Intra-EU trade of the aforementioned commodities is carried out as foreseen in [Commission Delegated Regulation n.º 2020/688](#), [Regulation nº. 853/2004](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council, [Regulation n.º 1069/2009](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council and [Regulation n.º 142/2011](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council.

7. Conclusion

Considering that:

- High pathogenicity avian influenza is a notifiable disease in Portugal;
- All outbreaks of high pathogenicity avian influenza were handled according to Commission Delegated Regulation nº 2020/687;
- Control measures for all poultry outbreaks included stamping out and cleaning and disinfection of affected holdings according to procedures approved by DGAV on the dates shown in table 1 and that the last such date is 16 April 2022;
- More than 28 days have elapsed since the end of the cleaning and disinfection of the premises affected by the last outbreak as prescribed in Article 10.4.6. of the *Terrestrial Code*;
- Surveillance has been carried out in accordance with Articles 10.4.26 to 10.4.30. of the *Terrestrial Code*;
- Commodities are imported in accordance with Articles 10.4.7 to 10.4.22. of the *Terrestrial Code*; and
- There are ongoing awareness programmes on HPAI regarding notification of suspicion of disease and to disseminate information concerning preventive measures.

The Delegate of Portugal to the OIE 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 22 April 2022, in accordance with Chapter 1.6. and Article 10.4.6. of the *Terrestrial Code* (2021) and consistent with the information provided to the OIE-WAHIS system.

Annex I

Statement to be included in the self-declaration document.

I, the undersigned, Dr. Susana Guedes Pombo, Delegate of Portugal to the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), take responsibility for the self-declaration of freedom from highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in accordance with the provisions of Article 10.4.6. of the OIE *Terrestrial Animal Health Code*.

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Drawn up on 24 May 2022

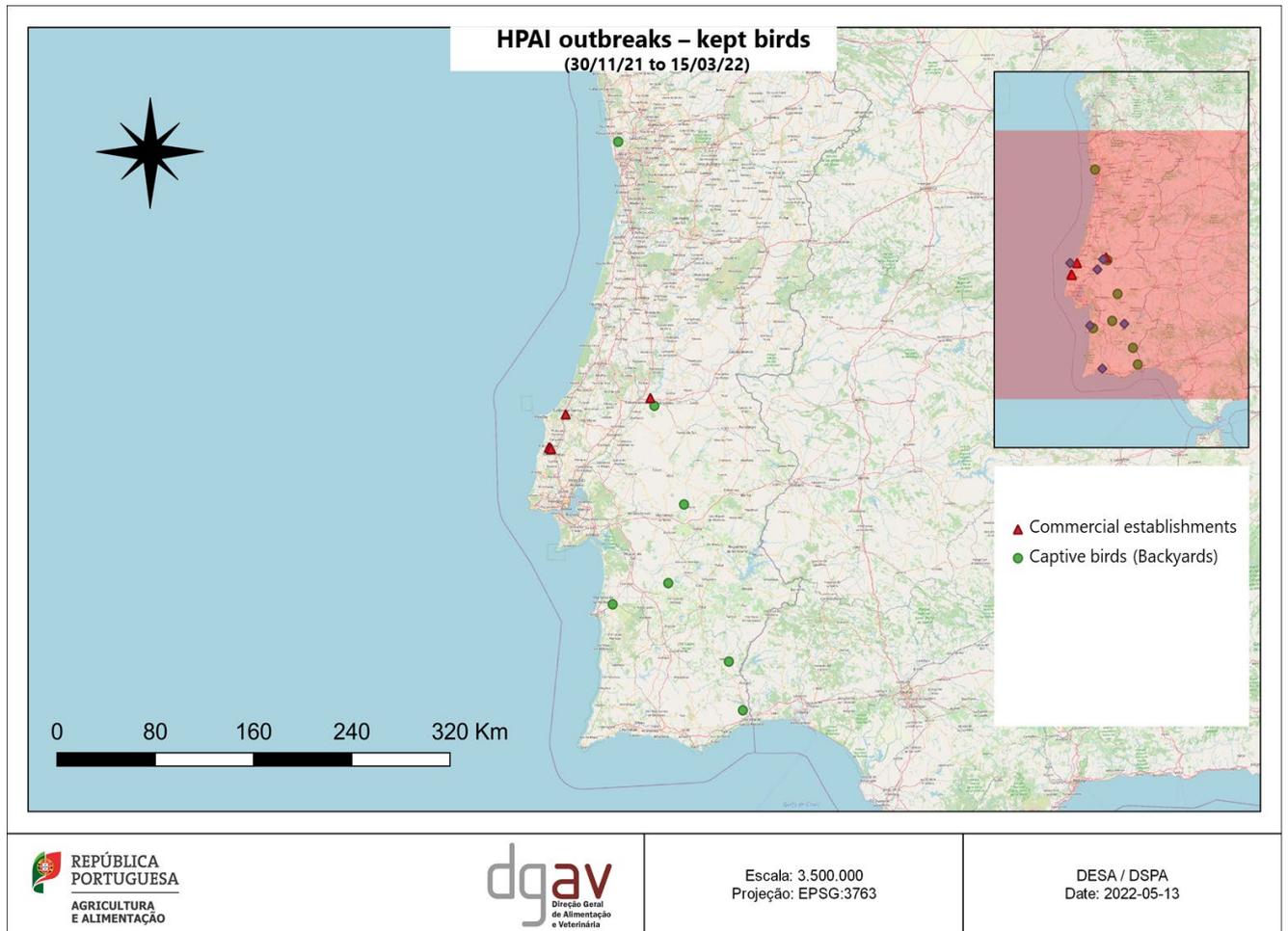
Signature of the Delegate:

Susana Isabel
Ferreira
Guedes Pombo

Assinado de forma digital por Susana Isabel Ferreira Guedes Pombo
DN: c=PT, title=Dir. Geral de Alimentação e Veterinária, o=Direção Geral de Alimentação e Veterinária, cn=Susana Isabel Ferreira Guedes Pombo
Dados: 2022.06.07 17:00:30 +01'00'

Dr. Susana Guedes Pombo
Chief Veterinary Officer - Portugal

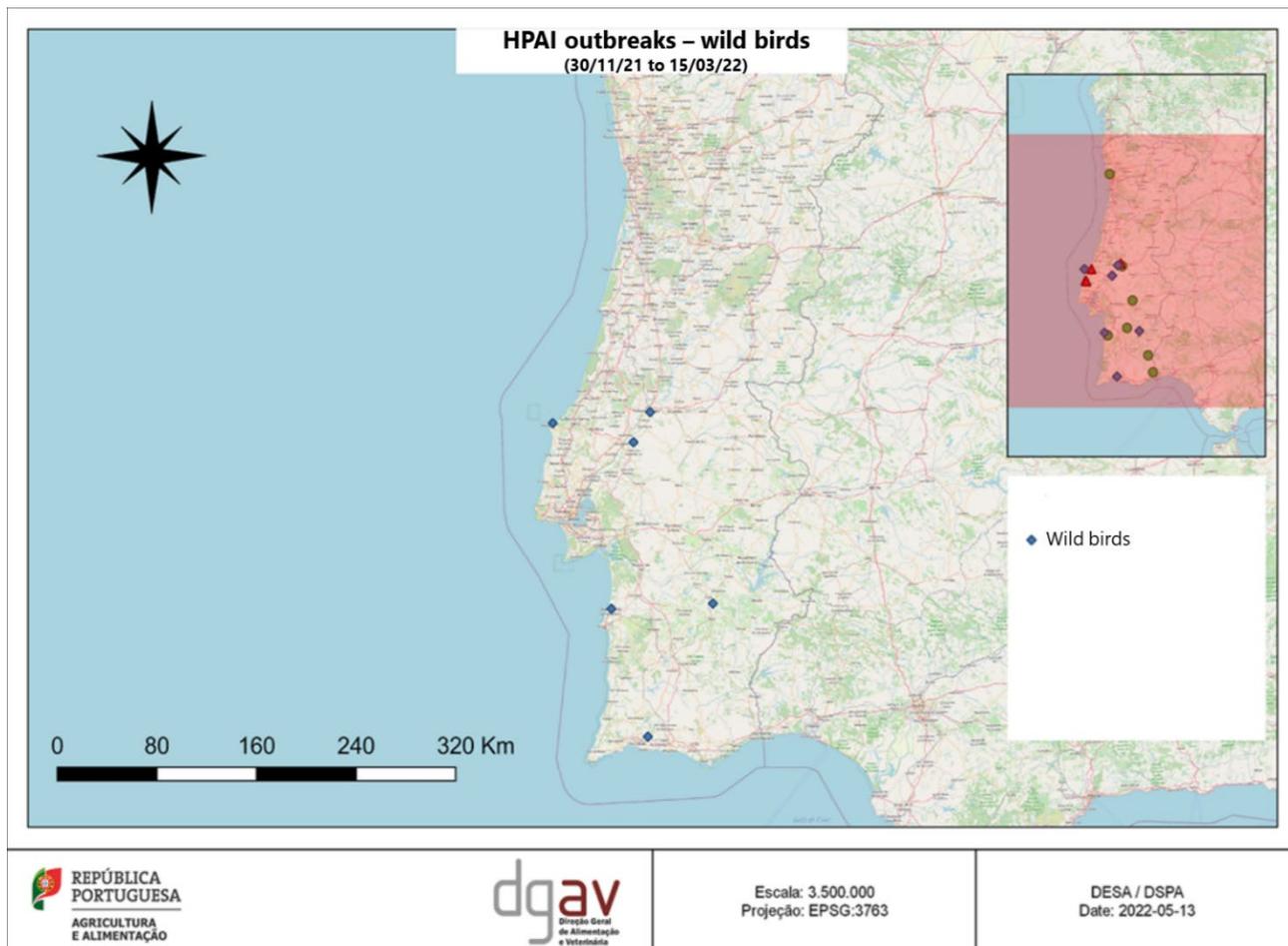
Annex II – Map of HPAI outbreaks in kept birds



Annex III: Outbreaks of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in wild birds in Portugal, from November 2021 to March 2022

Outbreak n°	OIE-WAHIS report ID	OIE-WAHIS outbreak n°	Municipality	HPAI confirmation date	Virus subtype	N° susceptible birds	Species
3B/GAAP	FUR_153546	ob_95362	Vila Nova da Barquinha	10/01/2022	H5N1	3 (found dead) within surveillance zone of outbreak 3/GAAP	Barbary ducks (<i>Cairina moschata</i>)
4B/GAAP	FUR_153577	ob_95717	Santiago do Cacém	17/01/2022	H5N1	1	Greylag goose (<i>Anser anser</i>)
5/GAAP	FUR_15396	ob_94970	Alpiarça	04/01/2022	H5N1	3 tested (about 100 birds, 15 found dead)	Greylag goose (<i>Anser anser</i>)
6/GAAP	FUR_153604	ob_95957	Peniche	10/01/2022	H5N1	2 (found dead)	Yellow-legged-gull (<i>Larus michahellis</i>)
9/GAAP	FUR_154461	ob_98600	Silves	25/02/2022	H5N1	1 (injured)	White stork (<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>)
12/GAAP	FUR_154504	ob_98738	Beja	10/03/2022	H5N1	1 (found dead)	Eurasian jay (<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>)

Annex IV - Map of HPAI outbreaks in wild birds



Annex V- Results of the annual surveillance of HPAI in wild birds (1 December 2021 – 24 May 2022)

Common name	Scientific name	N° tested samples				Result
		Dead birds	Cloacal swab	Oropharyngeal swab	Cloacal&Oropharyngeal swabs	
Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>				4	Negative
White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	5			8	Negative
Whooper Swan	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>	1				Negative
Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	2				Negative
Black Starling	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>	1				Negative
Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	1	1		14	Negative
Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>				66	Negative
Mediterranean Gull	<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>				1	Negative
Yellow legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>	4	1		52	Negative
Gull	<i>Larus sp.</i>	1				Negative
Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	1			2	Negative
Woodcock	<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>	2			2	Negative
Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>	1				Negative
Greylag goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	2				Negative
Lesser White Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	1				Negative
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	1				Negative
Black Headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	2			10	Negative
Red kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>		1	2		Negative
Puffin	<i>Fratercula arctica</i>				2	Negative
Muscovy Duck	<i>Cairina moschata</i>	1			49	Negative
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	2				Negative
Common kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>				2	Negative
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>				2	Negative
Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	8			2	Negative
Western marsh harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>				2	Negative
Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>				4	Negative
Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	7				Negative
Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>				2	Negative
Tawny owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>				2	Negative
Egyptian goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiacus</i>	1				Negative
Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	1				Negative
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>				6	Negative
Total number of samples		45	3	2	232	