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Self-declaration for the recovery of country freedom from infection with High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza viruses (HPAI) in poultry by Poland

Declaration sent to the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) on 2 November by Krzysztof Jażdżewski, WOAH Delegate for Poland and Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer, General Veterinary Inspectorate, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development

1. Introduction

The objective of the self-declaration is the recovery of Poland's freedom from infection with high pathogenicity avian influenza viruses (HPAI) in poultry, in accordance with Chapter 10.4. of the *Terrestrial Animal Health Code (Terrestrial Code)*.

The self-declaration covers the whole country and describes an outbreak of HPAI subtype H5N1 in poultry with influenza A viruses of high pathogenicity reported on 21 September 2022.

The starting date of the self-declaration is 2 November 2022. A statement of responsibility for this self-declaration is contained in Annex I.

2. Information about Poland's status regarding avian influenza

On 16 September 2022, Poland had regained the status as a country free from notifiable high pathogenicity avian influenza in poultry according to the *Terrestrial Code* after an epidemic of HPAI¹. The self-declaration covered the whole country and described four outbreaks of HPAI subtype H5N1, 1 outbreak of infection in wild birds, which was confirmed in July 2022.

The animal health status was maintained until 21 September 2022, when an outbreak of HPAI subtype H5N1 was confirmed in a commercial farm where in total 1677 birds were kept (1643 slaughter geese and 34 laying hens), located in Łódzkie region in Łęczycki district. This outbreak was recognized as primary and confirmed by PCR followed by sequencing at National Veterinary Research Institute in Puławy (National Reference Laboratory).

¹ The publication process of this self-declaration was discontinued due to the subsequent notification of an outbreak.

The map below shows the Polish administrative division into regions in and the location of the HPAI outbreak.



The epidemiological investigation concluded that the most likely cause of disease introduction into the holding was transmission of the virus from wild birds habitats circulating in Europe.

3. Control and eradication measures HPAI

In Poland avian influenza is a notifiable and subject for eradication disease according to national legislation: [Act of 11 March 2004 on protection of animal health and eradication of infectious diseases of animals](#). The rules of control of HPAI are in force pursuant to [the Commission Delegated Regulation \(EU\) 2020/687 of 17 December 2019](#) supplementing Regulation (EU) 2016/429 of the European Parliament and the Council, as regards rules for the prevention and control of certain listed diseases.

According to national law, farmers shall notify the Veterinary Inspection Authority or the nearest entity providing veterinary medicine services of the following clinical symptoms in poultry:

- increased mortality;
- a significant decrease in feed and water intake;
- nervous symptoms such as convulsions, neck twists, paralysis of the legs and wings, incoherence of movements;
- dyspnoea;
- cyanosis and ecchymosis;
- diarrhea;
- sudden drop in egg laying.

Stamping out policy:

Poland has handled the HPAI outbreaks according to the [Commission Delegated Regulation \(EU\) 2020/687 of 17 December 2019](#) supplementing Regulation (EU) 2016/429 of the European Parliament and the Council, as regards rules for the prevention and control of certain listed diseases and has culled all the poultry in the infected holdings.

Measures at the infected holdings:

- Prohibition of movement of animals.
- Culling of poultry and disposal of carcasses at the rendering plants according to [Regulation \(EC\) 2009/1069 of the European Parliament and of the Council](#).
- Cleaning and disinfection of buildings, equipment, vehicles etc. immediately after the culling.
- An epidemiological enquiry was conducted.
- All contact holdings were traced and investigated.

Implementation of the restricted zones:

- On the basis of local regulation, the restricted zones were established:
 - protection zone – area within a circle of a 3 km radius around the infected holding;
 - surveillance zone – area within a circle of a 10 km radius around the infected holdings.
- Within protection and surveillance zones all measures in accordance with Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/687 were implemented. Measures within the protection zone were lifted 21 days after completion of cleaning and disinfection of the infected holdings. At the end of this period, the protection zone was included in the surveillance zone for further 9 days.

Within these restriction zones the following measures were implemented:

- Inventory of all poultry holdings.
- Visits of holdings by official veterinarians and clinical examination of the poultry and laboratory tests, if necessary.
- Movement restrictions and prohibitions:
 - - no poultry or other birds as well as eggs, for incubation or consumption, might enter or leave a holding without authorization issued by local competent veterinary authority (District Veterinary Officer);
 - - fairs, markets, shows or other gatherings of poultry or other birds were prohibited;
 - - release of poultry for game birds restocking was 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;
 - disinfection procedures for staff and visitors entering or leaving poultry holdings;
 - cleaning and disinfection of vehicles entering or leaving poultry holdings;
 - disposal of dead birds in accordance with [Regulation \(EC\) 1069/2009](#).

4. Surveillance and early warning system

Poultry

Avian influenza is notifiable and subject for eradication in Poland according to national legislation - [Act of 11 March 2004 on protection of animal health and eradication of infectious diseases of animals](#). Veterinarians and farmers are obligated to notify the District Veterinary Officers immediately upon observation of any clinical signs of avian influenza.

Apart from passive surveillance, Poland 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*.

Serological surveillance in poultry is carried out as a part of “Programme aimed at detecting the occurrence of infections with avian influenza viruses” that is implemented. The competent authority for implementing this programme are the Veterinary Inspection bodies, i.e., the Chief Veterinary Officer, regional veterinary officers, district veterinary officers. Direct supervision of implementing the programme at the level of the district is exercised by the district veterinary officer who is also responsible for carrying out all official activities under the programme. The surveillance programme is applied on the whole territory of Poland, so that samples are considered as representative for the whole country. The programme is implemented in all 16 regions in Poland.

Due to the fact that in the Republic of Poland the density of farms keeping poultry of various species and production categories are significant, the program is implemented throughout the territory of the Republic of Poland. The only exception is farms keeping breeding ducks and breeding turkeys, the number of which varies depending on the voivodeship¹ and is relatively small compared to other poultry species (Annex II).

Testing of samples is carried out at the regional laboratories and National Reference Laboratory for Avian Influenza at the National Veterinary Research Institute in Puławy, where positive results from regional laboratories are also confirmed. Laboratory testing shall be carried out in accordance with Chapter 3.3.4. of the *Manual of Diagnostic tests and vaccines for terrestrial animals*. Detailed guidelines for exercising surveillance have been laid down in [Commission Delegated Regulation \(EU\) 2020/689 of 17 December 2019](#) supplementing Regulation (EU) 2016/429 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards rules for surveillance, eradication programmes, and disease-free status for certain listed and emerging diseases.

The surveillance programme is based on serological tests. Blood samples for serological tests are taken from all production categories of poultry and poultry species, at least from 5-10 birds (with the exception of ducks, geese and mallards from which 20 samples are taken) from each poultry holding. PCR testing is used in case of a positive serological result to confirm whether the relevant flock is infected by a virus. Summary of the surveillance program in January – October 2022 is in Annex III.

Wild birds

The programme is implemented by carrying out laboratory tests on dying wild birds and dead wild birds, as a passive surveillance system in the territory of the whole country. In particular, this surveillance covers wild birds, especially migratory wild waterfowl, which is subject to a higher risk of infection and transmission of the avian influenza virus subtype H5N1. An indication of passive surveillance is the detection of cases of abnormal (increased) mortality and/or clinical cases of disease in wild birds. Samples are taken from the cloaca and trachea or from the oropharyngeal cavity or from tissues of dead wild birds for testing using the PCR method or virus isolation.

In Poland, in 2022 in the passive surveillance of wild birds, 194 dead birds were tested, 43 of them were positive for H5N1.

5. Measures implemented to maintain freedom

The Veterinary Inspection followed a pre-determined strategy for the implementation of measures in case of an HPAI epidemic. Following a rapid risk assessment based on the presence of HPAI in Europe in summer 2021, the risk level for HPAI introduction from wild birds was raised to high.

Awareness campaigns have been carried by local competent authorities and Veterinary Inspection in cooperation with poultry associations continued to encourage to improve general biosecurity and farm management, especially in regions with higher risk of HPAI.

Poultry keepers and breeders have to comply with biosecurity measures established in Polish provisions ([Regulation of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of 31 March 2022 on preventive measures against avian influenza](#) is in force since May 2022). The General Veterinary Inspectorate continuously informs the public and stakeholders about the AI situation in wild birds using press releases, news and facts updates on the General Veterinary Inspectorate (GVI) homepage.

Import of poultry and poultry products is done in accordance with the relevant EU regulation which include the requirements in [Regulation \(EU\) 2016/429](#) and in accordance with the requirements of Articles 10.4.7. to 10.4.22. of the *Terrestrial Code*.

6. Awareness programs

Brochures reminding the requirement to immediately report disturbing symptoms, unexpected increased mortality or reduced production parameters have been published on the GIV website in places containing information about

¹ The highest-level administrative division of Poland

the protection of poultry and the symptoms of the disease. Biosecurity rules are also presented in the graphics. Links are presented below.

<https://www.wetgiw.gov.pl/nadzor-weterynaryjny/zasady-ochrony-drobiu-przed-grypa-ptakow>

<https://www.wetgiw.gov.pl/nadzor-weterynaryjny/grypa-ptakow>

Also there is information available on the Veterinary Services website (please see the link: <https://www.wetgiw.gov.pl/nadzor-weterynaryjny/objawy-ai-i-zgloszenie-podejrzenia> on obligation to report the above-mentioned cases and a description of possible reporting options.

Additionally, CVO issued recommendations for poultry keepers in which it emphasizes the importance of observing poultry and reporting suspected avian influenza and compliance with biosecurity rules. These recommendations and graphics from the GVI website can be found on leaflets at all levels of veterinary inspection, posted on websites and social media.

During meetings, e.g., when conducting training or inspections, breeders are encouraged to report suspicions of avian influenza if there are reasons for it.

7. Conclusion

Considering that:

- One outbreak of HPAI in poultry was detected on 21 September 2022. The outbreak has been handled according to [Commission Delegated Regulation \(EU\) 2020/687 of 17 December 2019 supplementing Regulation \(EU\) 2016/429 of the European Parliament and the Council](#), as regards rules for the prevention and control of certain listed diseases;
- Prior to the occurrence of the above-mentioned outbreak, Poland sent to WOAHA a self-declared free status from avian influenza in accordance with Article 10.4.3. of the *Terrestrial Code*;
- Stamping out measures were adopted including culling of poultry, disposal of carcasses, cleaning and disinfection of the infected holdings. The last cleaning and disinfection were approved by the Polish Veterinary Inspection on 4 October 2022;
- More than 28 days have elapsed since the end of the cleaning and disinfection approval of the last HPAI outbreak in accordance with Article 10.4.6. of the *Terrestrial Code*;
- Poland has a regular ongoing awareness program in place to encourage prompt reporting of HPAI;
- Surveillance has been carried out in accordance with Articles 10.4.26. to 10.4.30. of the *Terrestrial Code*.

The WOAHA Delegate of Poland 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 2 November 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 WAHIS.

Annex I. Statement.

Annex I

Statement to be included in the self-declaration document.

I, the undersigned, Dr Krzysztof Jażdżewski, the Delegate of Republic of Poland to the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH, founded as OIE), takes responsibility for the self-declaration of freedom from high pathogenicity avian influenza in poultry in Poland in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 10.4. Infection with Avian influenza viruses of the Terrestrial Animal Health Code.

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Drawn up on 2022

**DEPUTY
CHIEF VETERINARY OFFICER**

Signature of the Delegate:

Krzysztof Jażdżewski

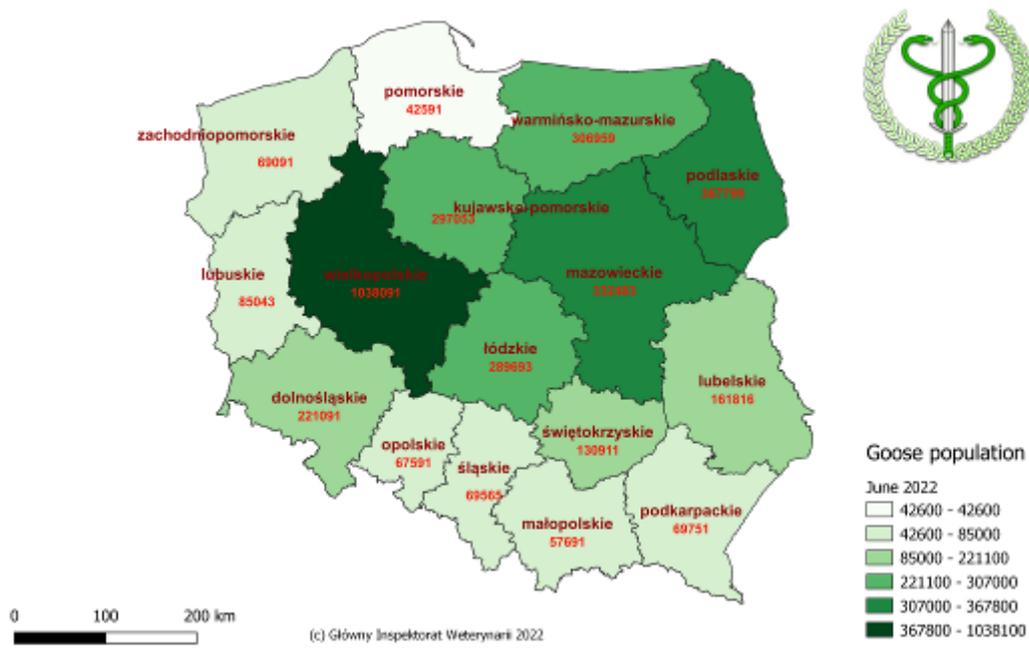
Annex II. Poultry population in Poland.

Species/Type	No. of holdings	No. of birds
Chicken breeders	860	21 393 302
Laying hens of Gallus gallus	2 181	50 544 386
Broilers of Gallus gallus	4 697	205 287 756
Breeding turkeys	43	383 198
Fattening turkeys	1 313	17 045 082
Ducks breeders	73	640 649
Fattening duck	749	4 108 517
Geese breeders	246	706 135
Fattening geese	1 066	2 796 537

Population of chickens in regions:



Population of geese in regions:



Annex III. Results of the Polish avian influenza in poultry for January – October 2022

Table 1: The results of the Polish avian influenza surveillance in poultry since January to October 2022.

Poultry type	Number of holdings on the territory of Poland	Number of holdings tested	Number of samples per holding	Method	Number of H5/H7 tests
Chicken breeders	579	51	10	HI H5/H7	1 020
Laying hens	892	51	10	HI H5/H7	1 020
Free range laying hens	522	50	10	HI H5/H7	1 000
Turkey breeders	22	15	10	HI H5/H7	300
Fattening turkeys	1 271	54	10	HI H5/H7	1 080
Ratites	22	16	5	HI H5/H7	160
Farmed game birds	36	22	10	HI H5/H7	440
Fattening ducks	703	69	20	HI H5/H7	2 760
Duck breeders	51	24	20	HI H5/H7	960
Fattening geese	886	74	20	HI H5/H7	2 840
Goose breeders	186	56	20	HI H5/H7	2 240
Summary	5 170	482	-	HI H5/H7	13 820

In Poland, in January – October 2022, 482 poultry farms were tested by conducting 6 910 hemagglutination inhibition tests for H5 and 6 910 for H7 (in total 13 820 tests). Five positive results of serological tests were obtained, however no presence of virus has been detected in the PCR tests.