

## DISCLAIMER

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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 World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) on 14 February 2023, by Dr Charlotte Vilstrup, WOA 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 WOA *Terrestrial Animal Health Code (Terrestrial Code)*. The self-declaration covers the whole country and describes four outbreaks of HPAI in poultry confirmed in the period from 9 November 2022 until 17 January 2023. These four described outbreaks of HPAI in poultry are the only outbreaks that have been confirmed since 11 February 2022.

The starting date of the self-declaration is 20 February 2023.

### 2. Avian influenza situation in Denmark

On 16 March 2022, Denmark regained its status as a country free from HPAI according to the *Terrestrial Code*. The status was maintained until 9 November 2022, when an outbreak of HPAI subtype H5N1 was confirmed in a turkey holding. The outbreak was the first in Danish poultry since 11 February 2022. Furthermore, three additional outbreaks of HPAI in poultry have been confirmed since the outbreak on 9 November 2022.

On 28 October 2022, Denmark confirmed influenza A viruses of high pathogenicity in captive birds other than poultry<sup>1</sup>. This was the first detection of influenza A viruses of high pathogenicity in captive birds other than poultry since 29 March 2022.

The disease has been detected in wild birds in Denmark continuously throughout 2022 and the first quarter of 2023.

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<sup>1</sup> [WAHIS \(woah.org\)](https://www.woah.org/) OB\_159043

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

### Details of the outbreaks in poultry

On 9 November 2022, an outbreak of HPAI subtype H5N1 was confirmed in a turkey holding with approximately 33,600 turkeys near the town of Lundby in the municipality of Slagelse. A suspicion of avian influenza was raised on 8 November 2022 due to clinical symptoms.

On 22 December 2022, an outbreak of HPAI subtype H5N1 was confirmed in a turkey holding with approximately 36,000 turkeys near the town of Stokkemarke in the municipality of Lolland. A suspicion of avian influenza was raised on 21 December 2022 due to clinical symptoms.

On 1 January 2023, an outbreak of HPAI subtype H5N1 was confirmed in a poultry holding with approximately 50,000 laying hens near the town of Ørum in the municipality of Hedensted. A suspicion of avian influenza was raised on 31 December 2022, due to clinical symptoms.

On 17 January 2023, an outbreak of HPAI subtype H5N1 was confirmed in a turkey holding with approximately 15,000 turkeys near the town of Bøgelunde in the municipality of Slagelse. A suspicion of avian influenza was raised on 16 January 2023, due to clinical symptoms.

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. For the latest outbreak of HPAI in poultry confirmed 17 January 2023 near the town of Bøgelunde, cleaning and disinfection of buildings, equipment, vehicles etc., were approved by the DVFA on 22 January 2023.

The DVFA established protection and surveillance zones of 3 and 10 km around the infected holdings and implemented the necessary measures to prevent the 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 investigations concluded that the most likely source of disease introduction into the holdings was contact with wild birds.

The outbreaks were reported to WOAH via World Animal Health Information System (WAHIS).

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

| Outbreak no. | WOAH-WAHIS report ID | WOAH-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            | FUR_157942           | OB_108749               | Slagelse     | 09.11.2022                 | H5N1       | Clinic         | 33,600                | Poultry  | Slaughter turkeys | 14.11.2022                                  |
| 2            | IN_158390            | OB_110767               | Lolland      | 22.12.2022                 | H5N1       | Clinic         | 36,000                | Poultry  | Slaughter turkeys | 27.12.2022                                  |

|   |            |           |           |            |      |        |        |         |                   |            |
|---|------------|-----------|-----------|------------|------|--------|--------|---------|-------------------|------------|
| 3 | FUR_158528 | OB_111232 | Hedensted | 01.01.2023 | H5N1 | Clinic | 50,000 | Poultry | Laying hens       | 05.01.2023 |
| 4 | FUR_158842 | OB_112471 | Slagelse  | 17.01.2023 | H5N1 | Clinic | 15,000 | Poultry | Slaughter turkeys | 22.01.2023 |

### 3. Control and eradication measures for HPAI

Avian influenza H5/H7 is notifiable in Denmark according to national legislation: [Order no. 1191 of 24.08.2022 on lists of infectious diseases for the act on the keeping of animals](#)

Veterinarians and farmers are obligated to notify the DVFA immediately upon observation of clinical signs of avian influenza.

The suspected holdings were immediately placed under official 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 holding:

- 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 in accordance with measures described in [Council Regulation \(EU\) 2020/687](#) and has culled all the poultry at the infected holdings. The cleaning and disinfection of the infected holdings were 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 holdings and implemented the necessary measures in accordance with [Council Regulation \(EU\) 2020/687](#). The DVFA issued national orders describing the zones.

#### 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 indicates 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 the 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 the case of fewer animals, all animals were tested.

#### Surveillance zone:

A sample of poultry holdings (at least 20% of the holdings with birds present in the surveillance zone) was visited by an official veterinarian from the DVFA, who performed a clinical examination of the poultry. If e.g., information from the owner or the examination indicates 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 the case of fewer animals, all animals were tested.).

The results of the surveillance in the zones performed during the period of 28 days after the stamping out was completed and can be seen in table 2.a. and 2.b. below.

The samples were tested using PCR 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).

| Outbreak number | Zone                | Total no. of holdings | Number of holdings visited | Number of holdings tested | Number of positive holdings |
|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1               | Lundby/Slagelse     | 17                    | 17                         | 17                        | 0                           |
| 2               | Stokkemærke/Lolland | 10                    | 10                         | 0 <sup>1</sup>            | 0                           |
| 3               | Ørum/Hedensted      | 15                    | 15                         | 15                        | 0                           |
| 4               | Bøgelunde/Slagelse  | 15                    | 15                         | 2                         | 0                           |

<sup>1</sup>No holdings with ducks, geese or holdings with clinical signs in protection zone. Therefore, no holdings were tested according to the description above.

| Outbreak number | Zone                | Total no. of holdings | Number of holdings visited | Number of holdings tested | Number of positive holdings |
|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1               | Lundby/Slagelse     | 38                    | 11                         | 11                        | 0                           |
| 2               | Stokkemærke/Lolland | 13                    | 6                          | 3                         | 0                           |
| 3               | Ørum/Hedensted      | 20                    | 20                         | 8                         | 0                           |
| 4               | Bøgelunde/Slagelse  | 46                    | 11                         | 6                         | 0                           |

## 4. Surveillance and early warning system

### Poultry

Avian influenza is notifiable in Denmark according to national legislation: [Order no. 1191 of 24.08.2022 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.

In addition to 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*.

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 on surveillance of avian influenza in poultry](#) has been in force as of 1 February 1 2022.

The new active surveillance programme in poultry is risk-based and includes poultry species that generally do 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. When traded, poultry have to be accompanied by a certificate stating that the flock of origin has been tested negative for avian influenza within the preceding three months.

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

Farmed game birds for restocking (e.g. pheasants and mallards) are tested four times during the production season. Breeding animals are tested before laying (serology) and offspring (virological test) three times during the season. All farmed game birds have to be tested within 2 months before movement.

The testing has to be done at an approved laboratory.

This surveillance programme is mainly based on serology. PCR testing is used only for offspring from game birds. 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 from 1 February 2022–10 February 2023 is available in table 3 below.

| Table 3. Results of the active Danish surveillance programme for avian influenza in poultry from 1. February 2022 to 10 February 2023. |                                  |                              |  |    |           |
|--|----------------------------------|------------------------------|--|----|-----------|
| Poultry category   | Holdings in Denmark <sup>1</sup> | Holdings tested <sup>2</sup> | Virologically positive holdings (H5, H7) |    |           |
|  |                                  |                              | H5                                       | H7 | H5 and H7 |
| Breeding geese   | 0                                | 0                            | 0  | 0  | 0         |
| Breeding ducks   | 0                                | 0                            | 0  | 0  | 0         |
| Fattening geese  | 5                                | 2                            | 0  | 0  | 0         |
| Fattening ducks  | 50                               | 13                           | 0  | 0  | 0         |
| Quails   | 0                                | 0                            | 0  | 0  | 0         |
| Farmed game birds  | 20                               | 17                           | 0  | 0  | 0         |

<sup>1</sup> All holdings 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, 2023.

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)

### 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 from 1 September 2022 to 10 February 2023. 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 September 2022 to 10 February 2023 |  |                                       |
|---|--|---------------------------------------|
|   | Passive surveillance (dead or sick wild birds) | Active surveillance (live wild birds) |
| <b>Birds sampled</b>  | 181  | 736                                   |
| <b>Samples/pools</b>  | 362 samples <sup>1</sup>                       | 226 pools <sup>2</sup>                |
| <b>Influenza A-positive birds</b>   | 90   | 52 pools <sup>3</sup>                 |
| <b>HPAI H5/H7-positive birds</b>  | 88   | 9 individual birds                    |

<sup>1</sup> Two samples/pools are taken from each sampled bird – a pool of tracheal and cloacal swap from the bird and a sample of brain material.  
<sup>2</sup> Pools of cloacal swabs were 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>3</sup> The actual number of positive birds is not known. If a pool is positive, at least one of the pooled birds contributing to the pool is positive. When a pool is positive for HPAI, samples from individual birds contributing to the pool are tested individually.

Source: Danish Veterinary Consortium, 2023.

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 November 22, 2022, [Order no. 1445 of 22.11.2022 on biosecurity measures against avian influenza](#), requiring all poultry and other captive birds to be housed indoors 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 captive birds with certain exemptions, e.g., exemptions may be made for captive birds in establishments with less than 100 birds and no direct or indirect contact with poultry and for animal welfare reasons. In addition, fairs, markets, shows or other gatherings of poultry or other captive birds are prohibited across the country. DVFA may grant exemptions for captive birds if certain conditions are fulfilled, e.g., birds must come from establishments with less than 100 captive birds and they must have no contact with poultry, directly or indirectly.

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.

The DVFA uses an 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 in 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:

- The recent outbreaks of high pathogenicity avian influenza in poultry has 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 of the infected holdings were approved by the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration as specified in table 1.
- 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 WOA *Terrestrial Code*.
- Surveillance has been carried out in accordance with Articles 10.4.26. to 10.4.30 of the WOA *Terrestrial Code*.
- There are regular ongoing awareness programs in place on avian influenza to encourage prompt reporting of HPAI suspicions.

**The WOA 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 20 February 2023 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.**

Statement to be included in the self-declaration document.

I, the undersigned,

.....

Delegate of.....

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

.....  
Infection with high pathogenicity avian influenza viruses (HPAIV)..... (disease)

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Drawn up on 14 / 02 / 23 .....

Signature of the Delegate:

