Avian influenza: why strong public policies are vital

Tackling avian influenza is essential for society

A threat to animal health leading to:
- death of infected and exposed birds
- decreased animal welfare
- large die-offs of wild birds, posing a threat to biodiversity

Mortality rates within poultry flocks are often up to 100%

A socioeconomic impact triggering:
- major financial impact for farmers and significant job losses in the whole poultry production chain
- a drop in poultry production and associated products
- heightened prices of poultry meat and products
- potential reduction in travel and tourism in affected areas

Food security and international trade are heavily impacted

Public health is also at risk.

Occasionally, avian influenza has crossed the species barrier and has infected humans, causing severe symptoms and mortality.

More recently, the disease has spread to land and sea mammals, suggesting that avian influenza viruses are becoming more adapted to mammals, including humans.
The role of policy-makers

Policy-makers have the responsibility to support national Veterinary Services in the fight against avian influenza. Several key actions should be taken:

**Investing in strong and resilient animal health systems** is critical in overcoming the challenges relating to avian influenza and in preventing the disease from spreading. Building the capacity of the veterinary workforce is a necessary step which requires:

- Adequate financial resources
- Sufficient human resources
- Quality training of the veterinary workforce

**Promoting collaboration** across sectors using a One Health approach is essential for stopping the spread of the disease

**Raising awareness** of avian influenza among key stakeholders

**Encouraging poultry farmers to take responsibility** including through compensation schemes for farmers who have lost their animals as a result of mandatory culling. These incentives encourage farmers to participate in early detection measures and in the transparent reporting of animal disease occurrences

Controlling avian influenza is key to improving animal health and welfare, safeguarding livelihoods and reducing the risks to public health, thereby ensuring a better future for us all.

Discover our resources

- Regular situation reports to follow the disease evolution
- The WAHIS system and its distribution list to share the latest disease notifications
- WOAH science-based standards on avian influenza to help frame national legislations