

## DISCLAIMER

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## Self-declaration of the recovery of country freedom from infection with *high pathogenicity avian influenza viruses (HPAI)* in poultry by the Czech Republic

**Self-declaration sent to the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) on 11 July 2023, by Dr Zbyněk Semerád, Delegate of Czech Republic to WOAH, Director General State Veterinary Administration, Ministry of Agriculture, Czech Republic.**

### I. Introduction

In accordance with the WOAH procedure for publication of a self-declaration of animal health status, and Chapter 1.6. of the *Terrestrial Animal Health Code (Terrestrial Code)*, the State Veterinary Administration of the Czech Republic is submitting the following documentation, for publication by WOAH, attesting that the Czech Republic has regained country freedom from infection with high pathogenicity avian influenza viruses (HPAI) in poultry for the entire territory of the Czech Republic from 11 July 2023 in accordance with Article 10.4.6. of the *Terrestrial Code*. This self-declaration covers the entire country and describes eight outbreaks of HPAI in poultry reported since 1 December 2022. On 16 May 2022, the Czech Republic regained its status as a country free from HPAI in poultry according to the *Terrestrial Code*. The status was maintained until 1 December 2022, when a new outbreak of HPAI was confirmed in poultry.

The starting date of this self-declaration is 11 July 2023.

### II. Evidence that avian influenza is a notifiable disease in the Czech Republic

Poultry holdings in the Czech Republic are registered in the register of holdings pursuant to the provisions of Act No 154/2000 (Breeding Act) and its implementing Decree of the Ministry of Agriculture No 136/2004.

HPAI is a notifiable disease according to EU legislation – [Regulation \(EU\) No 2016/429 of the European Parliament and of The Council \("Animal Health Law"\)](#), [Commission Implementing Regulation \(EU\) 2018/1882](#) and national legislation – [Veterinary Act, i.e. Act No 166/1999](#) (HPAI is listed in Annex II "Animal diseases and diseases communicable from animals to humans considered dangerous" to that Act).

Control measures for HPAI in poultry, other captive birds and wild birds are laid down in the following EU legislation and national legislation:

- Regulation (EU) No 2016/429 of the European Parliament and of The Council (“Animal Health Law”)
- [Commission Delegated Regulation \(EU\) No 2020/687](#)
- [Veterinary Act, i.e. Act No 166/1999<sup>1</sup>](#)

Control measures implemented in the case of an HPAI outbreak in poultry are in accordance with Chapter 10.4. of *Terrestrial Code*:

- all suspect cases of avian influenza are immediately investigated by official veterinarians,
- all poultry on affected holdings is culled and carcasses are disposed of,
- cleaning and disinfection after the culling,
- an epidemiological investigation is conducted, all contacts are traced back and investigated,
- a protection zone (of the radius of 3 km) and a surveillance zone (of the radius of 10 km) are established.

### III. Control measures for HPAI outbreaks

On 16 May 2022, the Czech Republic regained its self-declared freedom from HPAI in poultry pursuant to the *Terrestrial Code*. The status was maintained until 1 December 2022, when an outbreak of avian influenza virus of subtype H5 was confirmed on a commercial holding keeping fattening ducks. HPAI and neuraminidase N1 were confirmed on 2 December 2022. It was the first outbreak in poultry in the Czech Republic since the last one, which had ended on 16 April 2022.

On 4 January 2023, the Czech Republic confirmed HPAI in wild birds. This was the first detection of HPAI in wild birds since February 2022. Since then, HPAI has been detected in 77 wild birds. HPAI has been detected also in 25 backyard flocks with birds other than poultry (birds kept in a single household, their products used exclusively in the same household, no contact with poultry or poultry holdings).

#### Details of the outbreaks in poultry

From 1 December 2022 to 10 July 2023, eight HPAI outbreaks of subtype H5N1 in poultry were detected in five of 14 regions of the Czech Republic (see Figure 1). The outbreaks were detected on commercial holdings (fattening ducks, laying hens, fattening turkeys, fattening turkeys and broilers, breeding ducks). A summary of the HPAI outbreaks in poultry from 1 December 2022 to 10 July 2023 can be found in Table 1.

The first HPAI outbreak in poultry of subtype H5N1 (outbreak no.1) was confirmed on a commercial holding with approximately 17,000 fattening ducks on 2 December 2022 in the municipality of Frahelž in the South Bohemian Region. The suspicion of avian influenza was raised due to an increased mortality of ducks and the presence of clinical symptoms.

On 31 December 2022, an outbreak of HPAI, subtype H5N1, was confirmed on a laying hen holding with approximately 740,000 hens in the municipality of Brod nad Tichou in the Plzeň Region (outbreak no.2). The suspicion of avian influenza was raised due to a slightly increased mortality of hens without other clinical symptoms.

A holding keeping approximately 1,000 fattening turkeys and 12,000 broilers (*Gallus gallus*) in the municipality of Sedlčany in the Central Bohemian Region was found to be infected with HPAI, subtype H5N1, on 3 January 2023 (outbreak no.3). The suspicion of avian influenza was raised due to increased mortality of turkeys and the presence of clinical symptoms in turkeys.

On 16 January 2023, an outbreak of HPAI, subtype H5N1, was confirmed on a holding keeping approximately 1,800 breeding ducks (juvenile ducks) in the municipality of Nouzov in the Central Bohemian Region (outbreak no.4). Ducks showed no clinical signs at the time of sampling. The affected holding was located in the surveillance zone of the outbreak of HPAI in birds other than poultry. Samples were taken before the planned movement from the surveillance zone.

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<sup>1</sup> Available in the Czech language only

On 19 January 2023, an outbreak of HPAI, subtype H5N1, was confirmed on a holding keeping approximately 23,000 breeding ducks in the municipality of Dobřenice in the Hradec Králové Region (outbreak no.5). The suspicion on avian influenza was raised due to drop in egg production.

On 26 January an outbreak of HPAI, subtype H5N1, was confirmed on a holding in the municipality of Lány in the Central Bohemian Region with approximately 10,000 fattening ducks (outbreak no.6). The suspicion of avian influenza was raised due to an increased mortality of birds.

Two last outbreaks were confirmed on holdings with fattening turkeys in the municipality of Rychvald in the Moravian-Silesian Region. The first affected holding with approximately 15,000 turkeys was found to be infected with HPAI, subtype H5N1, on 2 May 2023 (outbreak no.7). The suspicion of avian influenza was raised due to increased mortality of turkeys and the presence of clinical symptoms. The second affected holding, located in close proximity to outbreak no.7, with approximately 14,000 turkeys was found to be infected with HPAI, subtype H5N1, on 9 May 2023 (outbreak no.8). The suspicion of avian influenza was raised due to surveillance in relation to outbreak no.7 and the presence of clinical symptoms in turkeys. A common restriction zone was established around the outbreaks no.7 and no.8.

All remaining poultry on affected holdings was immediately culled and carcasses and poultry products were disposed of by rendering. The last stamping out policy was performed in the last outbreak (outbreak no.8) from 4 to 5 May 2023. Preliminary cleaning and disinfection of buildings, equipment, vehicles etc. were performed immediately after culling. Finally, the final cleaning and disinfection was performed on affected holdings. The final cleaning and disinfection of the last two HPAI outbreaks were completed on 12 June 2023.

Protection and surveillance zones (3 and 10 km) were established around all affected holdings and all measures necessary to prevent spreading of the infection from affected holdings were taken in accordance with the EU legislation. The State Veterinary Administration ordered a ban on any movements of live and slaughtered poultry, other birds, eggs, meat, etc. in protection and surveillance zones without the authorisation by the State Veterinary Administration.

The most probable source of infection is an introduction of the virus into affected holdings *via* wild birds.

Within the territory of the Czech Republic, there are currently no active HPAI outbreaks in poultry or any restriction zones due to HPAI outbreaks in poultry.

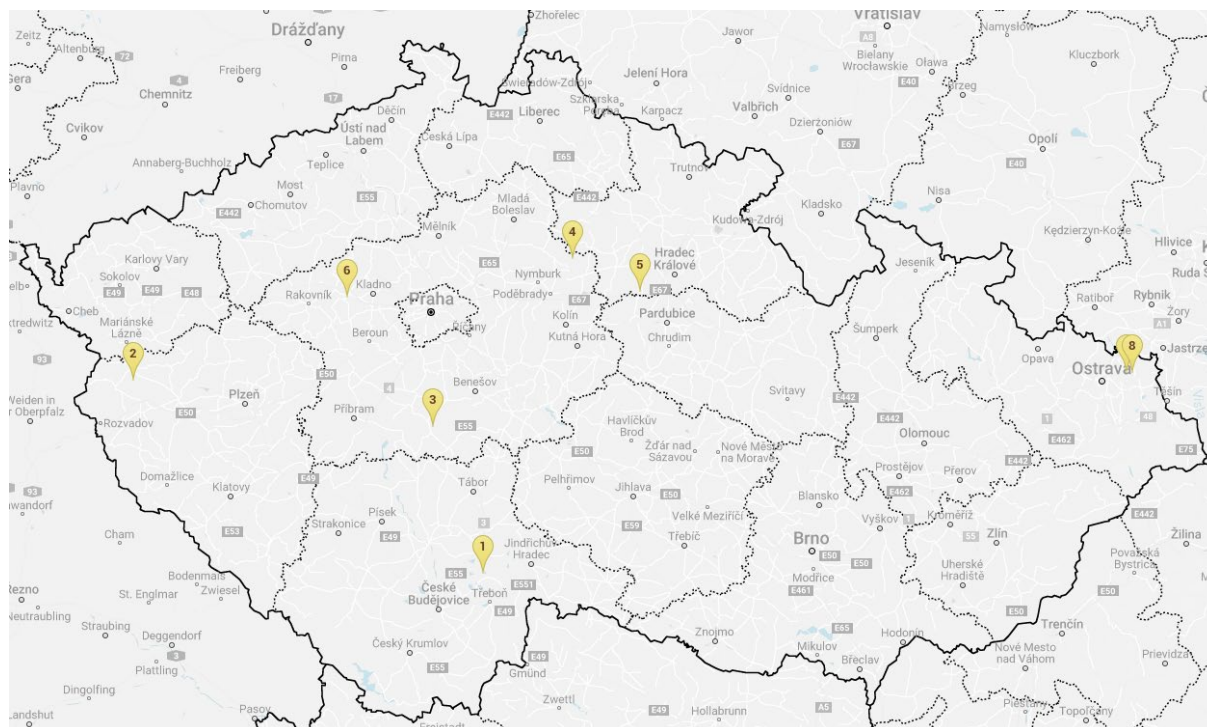
An immediate notification and follow-up reports (including the final report) were sent to WAHIS: World Animal Health Information System and can be found on the [WOAH official website](#).

**Table 1:** HPAI outbreaks in poultry in the Czech Republic from 1 December 2022 to 10 July 2023

Outbreak number	Municipality	Type of holding	Type of suspicion	Approx. number of susceptible birds	Region	Completion of the final cleaning and disinfection	Observation number from WAHIS
1	Frahelž	commercial – fattening ducks	clinical	17,000	South Bohemian	28 December 2022	OB_109762 - 2022/011
2	Brod nad Tichou	commercial – laying hens	clinical	740,000	Plzeň	5 March 2023	OB_111384 - 2022/19
3	Sedlčany	commercial – fattening turkeys and broilers	clinical	13,000	Central Bohemian	13 February 2023	OB_112182 - 2023/2
4	Nouzov	commercial – breeding ducks	surveillance	1,800	Central Bohemian	14 February 2023	OB_113107 - 2023/08
5	Dobřenice	commercial – breeding ducks	clinical	23,000	Hradec Králové	19 February 2023	OB_113109 - 2023/10

6	Lány	commercial – fattening ducks	clinical	10,000	Central Bohemian	27 March 2023	OB_113725 - 2023/11
7	Rychvald	commercial – fattening turkeys	clinical	15,000	Moravian -Silesian	12 June 2023	OB_117906 - 2023/21
8	Rychvald	commercial – fattening turkeys	surveillance , clinical	14,000	Moravian -Silesian	12 June 2023	OB_118531 - 2023/22

**Figure 1: Localisation of HPAI outbreaks in poultry**



#### IV. Surveillance and early warning system

The Czech surveillance programme and strategy for demonstrating freedom from HPAI infection are in accordance with Chapter 1.4. on Animal Health Surveillance and Articles 10.4.26. to 10.4.30. of the *Terrestrial Code*.

Passive surveillance for avian influenza in poultry, including an early warning system has been in place since 2005. According to the Veterinary Act, i.e. Act No 166/1999, as amended, all poultry keepers must report disease suspicions (high mortality or clinical signs) to the relevant competent veterinary authority. Poultry keepers with commercial holdings must record changes in poultry health according to the Veterinary Act and Decree No 176/2023. In the case of unusual changes in poultry health, poultry keepers must contact the relevant competent veterinary authority. The following changes in poultry health must be notified:

- drop in feed and water intake higher than 20 %,
- drop in egg production higher than 5 % for more than two days,
- mortality rate higher than 3 % a week,
- any clinical signs or *post-mortem* lesions suggesting avian influenza.

All suspected cases of avian influenza are investigated immediately by veterinary authorities. When an official veterinarian checks a holding where an outbreak is suspected, the following measures are taken: check of production and health records of the holding concerned, clinical inspection of birds and sampling. Testing of samples is performed at the State Veterinary Institutes accredited for avian influenza testing and designated by the State Veterinary Administration as official laboratories.

## Active surveillance programme in poultry

The programme of active surveillance for AI in poultry has been implemented since 2022 in compliance with the requirements of [Commission Delegated Regulation \(EU\) No 2020/689](#) and has been based on molecular and serological testing of target species of poultry. The following target populations are included in the programme of active surveillance: laying hens, free range laying hens, chicken breeders, turkey breeders, duck breeders, goose breeders, fattening turkeys, fattening ducks, fattening geese, farmed game birds – gallinaceous and farmed game birds – waterfowl.

The programme of active surveillance in poultry is incorporated in the document “[Methodology of Animal Health Control and Ordered Vaccination](#)”<sup>2</sup> for the relevant year; the document determines the main strategies in veterinary care and specifies obligatory preventive and diagnostic actions in the Czech Republic in accordance with the Veterinary Act.

Holdings with gallinaceous birds are tested serologically. Samples from ten birds (except for ducks, geese and farmed game birds – waterfowl) are taken on each tested poultry holding from different poultry houses/coops, where more than one poultry house/coop is present on a holding. ELISA test is used for an initial serological screening of blood samples from gallinaceous birds. In the case of positive ELISA reaction, typing by HI test (hemagglutination inhibition test) is performed. If HI tests confirm H5 or H7 antibodies, an epidemiological investigation and sampling for testing by molecular methods (real-time RT-PCR) is performed on the holding concerned.

On holdings with waterfowl (ducks, geese, farmed game birds), oropharyngeal/tracheal and cloacal swabs from twenty birds are taken for testing by molecular methods in accordance with the “Methodology of Animal Health Control and Ordered Vaccination” for the relevant year. Samples are analysed using real-time RT-PCR.

During the year, samples are taken from all production categories of poultry and all poultry species.

The active surveillance programme is implemented in the entire territory of the Czech Republic, so that samples are considered representative. The programme is implemented in all 14 regions of the Czech Republic.

Samples are taken by official veterinarians (swabs, blood) or by authorised private veterinarians (only blood) who are in charge of taking official samples. Testing of the samples is performed at the laboratories of the State Veterinary Institutes only.

From 1 December 2022 to 10 July 2023, 2 430 blood samples and swabs originating from 117 poultry holdings were tested in total. No antibodies against subtypes H5 or H7 and no avian influenza viruses were detected in this period within the framework of active surveillance in poultry. The overall results of active surveillance in poultry from 1 December 2022 to 10 July 2023 are recorded in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Avian influenza active surveillance results from 1 December 2022 to 10 July 2023 in the Czech Republic

Category of poultry	from 1 December 2022 to 12 June 2023		from 13 June to 10 July 2023		Results (ELISA/real time RT-PCR)
	Number of sampled holdings	Number of samples (blood, swabs)	Number of sampled holdings	Number of samples (blood, swabs)	
Laying hens	21	210	14	140	negative
Free range laying hens	4	40	5	50	negative
Duck breeders	1	40	8	320	negative

<sup>2</sup> Available in the Czech language only

Goose breeders	0	0	4	160	negative
Fattening turkeys	16	160	8	80	negative
Fattening ducks	18	720	5	200	negative
Fattening geese	0	0	1	40	negative
Farmed game birds – gallinaceous	2	20	5	50	negative
Farmed game birds – waterfowl	1	40	4	160	negative
<b>In total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>1 230</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>1 200</b>	<b>negative</b>

#### Active surveillance programme in restriction zones

After stamping out and preliminary cleaning and disinfection of holdings with outbreaks, active strengthened surveillance pursuant to Article 10.4.28. of the *Terrestrial Code* was implemented. The active surveillance includes official checks on poultry holdings in protection and surveillance zones selected on the basis of risk analysis. Risk factors are, in particular, the following: commercial use of poultry and products, number of birds kept on the holding concerned, holdings keeping poultry of different poultry species, holdings epidemiologically linked to outbreaks, location of holdings close to outbreaks, etc. Taking samples in protection zones for molecular testing is necessary for the eradication of HPAI in the Czech Republic. The strengthened surveillance was implemented for the purposes of veterinary surveillance in protection zones, in order to move poultry and to exclude the circulation of HPAI viruses in the zones. The results of strengthened surveillance implemented in protection zones established around HPAI outbreaks in poultry are recorded in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Avian influenza molecular surveillance in protection zones (after stamping out) established around HPAI outbreaks in poultry from 1 December 2022 to 10 July 2023.

<b>Outbreak</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Number of checked holdings – protection zone</b>	<b>Number of samples (tracheal/oropharyngeal and cloacal swabs, carcasses)</b>	<b>Results (real-time RT-PCR)</b>
Frahelž	South Bohemian	21	742	negative
Brod nad Tichou	Plzeň	8	254	negative
Sedlčany	Central Bohemian	7	240	negative
Nouzov	Central Bohemian	9	255	negative
Dobřenice	Hradec Králové	20	562	negative
Lány	Central Bohemian	9	282	negative
Rychvald	Moravian-Silesian Region	6	134	negative

## Surveillance programme in wild birds

Surveillance for HPAI in wild bird is implemented as a passive surveillance system by laboratory investigation of diseased wild birds or birds found dead. The surveillance is specifically focused on target species listed by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). Cloacal and oropharyngeal/tracheal swabs or tissues from wild birds are taken for molecular testing (real-time RT-PCR) at the State Veterinary Institutes.

From 1 December 2022 to 10 July 2023, a total of 117 wild birds were tested for avian influenza in the Czech Republic. From this number, 77 HPAI-positive wild birds were detected in 10 of 14 regions of the Czech Republic. So far, HPAI has been detected in the following species: 4 mute swans (*Cygnus olor*), 3 mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*), 2 great egrets (*Ardea alba*), 1 greylag goose (*Anser anser*), 60 seagulls (*Larus ridibundus*) and 7 peregrine falcons (*Falco peregrinus*). The H5N1 subtype of HPAI was detected in all positive cases. The last positive HPAI case in wild birds was confirmed on 30 May 2023.

## **V. Measures implemented to maintain freedom**

### Awareness campaign and risk mitigation measures

Information on the animal health situation related to avian influenza and [recommendations](#) and guidance to poultry keepers and owners of [other captive birds](#), hunters, veterinarians and the general public were published on the official website of the [State Veterinary Administration](#) and shared *via* social media and [press releases](#).

Due to an unfavourable HPAI situation in the Czech Republic at the end of 2022, the State Veterinary Administration issued veterinary emergency measures, so-called “housing order”, for the entire territory of the Czech Republic on 13 December 2022; the measures were in force until 2 March 2023. Poultry and birds other than poultry (backyard birds) had to be kept indoors due to an increased risk of HPAI. This compulsory “housing order” required all poultry to be housed indoors to protect them from contact with wild birds. The “housing order” applied to the entire country and to all categories of poultry with certain exceptions for animal welfare reasons.

The following requirements apply to commercial poultry holdings in the entire country ([Decree No 176/2023](#)<sup>3</sup>):

feed and drinking water for poultry had to be arranged indoors or at a place which wild waterfowl could not reach;

prohibition of keeping waterfowl together with other poultry or captive birds;

holdings had to be protected against wild birds and other animals.

### Import of poultry and poultry products

All imports from third countries, as well as intra-community trade in poultry, poultry products and hatching eggs are subject to veterinary certification and checks in accordance with the following EU legislations: [Commission Delegated Regulation \(EU\) No 2019/2035](#), [Commission Delegated Regulation \(EU\) No 2020/688](#) and [Commission Delegated Regulation \(EU\) No 2020/692](#) and in accordance with the requirements of Articles 10.4.7. to 10.4.22. of the *Terrestrial Code*. When poultry and other birds, hatching eggs, poultry meat, table eggs and products thereof are imported from non-EU-countries, consignments must be accompanied by an animal health certificate.

## **VI. Conclusions**

Considering that:

- Avian influenza is a notifiable disease in the Czech Republic,
- Prior to the occurrence of the HPAI outbreak at the beginning of December 2022, the Czech Republic was free from highly pathogenic avian influenza virus in poultry from 16 May 2022,
- There are effective regular ongoing awareness programs in place on avian influenza to encourage prompt reporting of HPAI suspicions,

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<sup>3</sup> Available in the Czech language only

- Stamping out policy, cleaning and disinfection were applied on all affected holdings following the confirmation of the virus in poultry. The final date of cleaning and disinfection was certified on 12 June 2023,
- 28 days have elapsed as stipulated in Article 10.4.6. of the *Terrestrial Code* since the completion of the final cleaning and disinfection on the last affected holding,
- surveillance was implemented in accordance with Articles 10.4.26. to 10.4.30. of the *Terrestrial Code*,
- Ongoing avian influenza awareness programme and national rules for biosecurity measures are in place.

**The WOAH Delegate of the Czech Republic declares that the country complies with the requirements to declare the recovery of freedom from infection with high pathogenicity avian influenza virus (HPAI) in poultry as of 11 July 2023, in accordance with Chapter 1.6. and Article 10.4.6. of *Terrestrial Code* (2023 edition) and consistent with the information provided to WAHIS.**



Statement to be included in the self-declaration document.

I, the undersigned, Zbyněk Semerád, DVM, Director General (CVO)  
.....

Delegate of... the Czech Republic .....

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

high pathogenicity avian influenza in poultry  
.....  
..... (disease)

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Drawn up on 11 / 04 / 2023 .....

Signature of the Delegate:

