



**REPUBLIC OF POLAND**  
VETERINARY INSPECTION  
**DEPUTY**  
**CHIEF VETERINARY**  
**OFFICER**  
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Warsaw, 12 July 2023

TO:  
**Monique Elloit**  
**Director General**  
**World Organization of Animal Health**

OUR REFERENCE: WChZZ.432.175.2023

SUBJECT: A/H5N1 virus infections in cats

Implementing the provision of point 1.1.5 of the Terrestrial Animal Health Code, I provide below the information on A/H5N1 avian influenza virus infections in cats identified in Poland.

Since 19 June 2023 the General Veterinary Inspectorate has begun to receive the first unofficial information from different parts of the country about cat infections with an agent of unknown aetiology. The infections had a high mortality rate.

On 22 June at the National Reference Laboratory for avian influenza in the National Veterinary Research Institute in Puławy analyses were carried out on the first 4 samples taken from dead cats from the pomorskie voivodeship. The results of the analyses showed infection of the cats with avian influenza virus type A subtype H5N1.

To date, the following have been sent for laboratory tests in total:

47 cats + 1 caracal to the NVRI in Puławy  
1 cat to the Jagiellonian University of Kraków,  
1 cat to the Medical University of Warsaw,  
1 cat to the laboratory of a private veterinary clinic.

Of the samples tested, 29 were positive (28 cats and 1 caracal).

The Veterinary Inspection is carrying out epizootic investigations in relation to 25 cases in which animal owners agreed to the data collection. Analyses of the data are ongoing and concern cases reported from the following voivodeships: kujawsko-



pomorskie, lubelskie, mazowieckie, opolskie, pomorskie, wielkopolskie, dolnośląskie, warmińsko-mazurskie, dolnośląskie.

From the beginning of the month until 11 July the number of reported cases has been decreasing.

At the same time the analysis of the viral genome sequence carried out at the NVRI in Puławy, indicates that all analysed viruses from cats show are very closely related to each other and, according to the nomenclature used by the EU Reference Laboratory (EURL) in Padua, belong to the CH genotype. This genotype was predominant during the peak of the current avian influenza season (2022/2023) and was mainly found in poultry in the wielkopolskie voivodeship, as well as in wild birds in different regions of the country. Most recently, a virus belonging to the CH genotype was detected in a white stork at the beginning of June in the district of Tarnów (outbreak no. 119/2023), and it means that the strains from cats are most closely related with this genotype. This indicates that so far analysed H5N1 avian influenza viruses from cats probably originate from a single or very similar, unidentified sources. Furthermore, molecular analysis indicates the presence of 2 mutations that increase the adaptation of the virus to mammals.

