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Self-declaration of the recovery of freedom from Newcastle disease by the Czech Republic

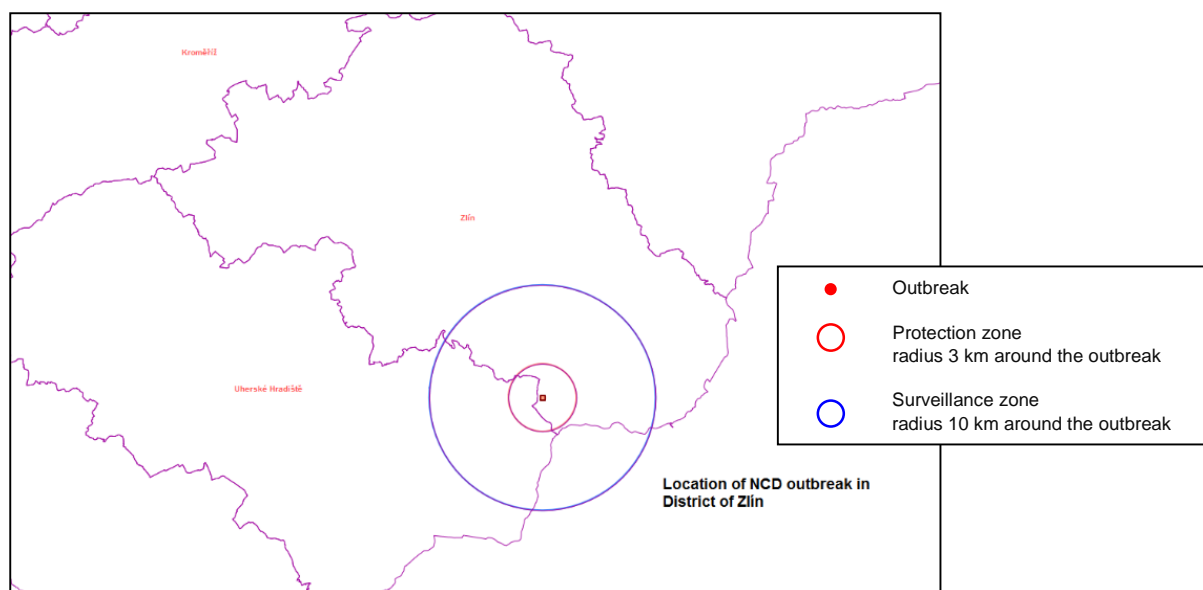
Declaration sent to the OIE on 13 July 2018 by Dr Semerád Zbyněk, OIE Delegate for the Czech Republic Ministry of Agriculture

I. Information about Czech Republic status regarding Newcastle disease

The State Veterinary Administration of the Czech Republic is pleased to report that there have not been any newly detected outbreaks of Newcastle disease (ND) in poultry since the last outbreak confirmed on 13 April 2018. Within the territory of the Czech Republic, there are currently no active outbreaks or established restricted zones.

On 9th April 2018 a backyard farmer of laying hens (*Gallus Gallus*) from the village Šanov reported information about the death of 11 hens out of 34 (early warning system) to the Regional State Veterinary Administration (RVA) of Zlín. The animals showed clinical signs before death such as respiratory disorders (breath with an open beak), apathy and stopped laying eggs. On 10th April 2018, RVA sent samples of dead birds to the National reference laboratory (NRL) in the State Veterinary Institute of Prague (for virological testing for Avian influenza and ND). On 13th April the NRL confirmed ND. The last outbreak of ND in Czech Republic had been detected in poultry in January 2013.

Figure 1. Localisation of Newcastle disease outbreak and restriction zones, Czech Republic, 2018.



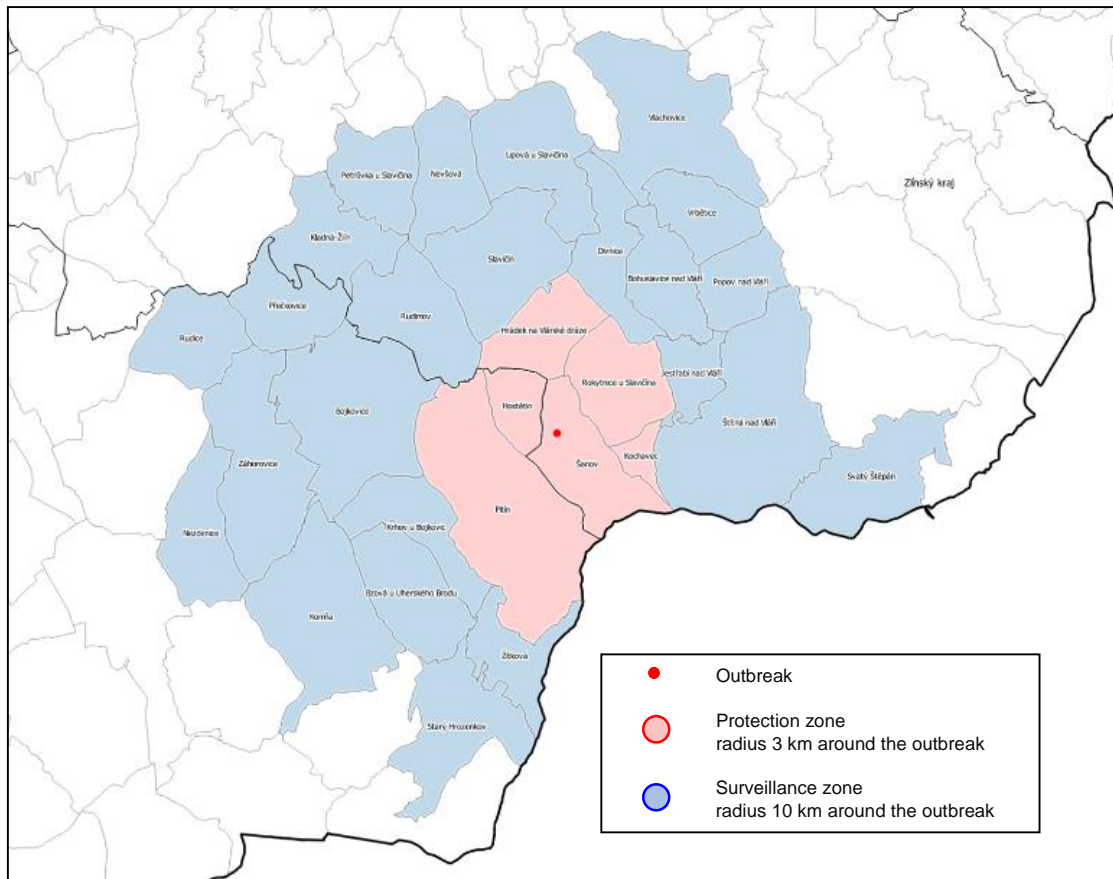
During an epidemiological investigation was found that only a few birds from the infected flock came from the holding with rearing hens, where vaccination against ND was carried out. The age range of the birds was 1 - 3 years. The backyard flock was in the fenced yard where feed was held inside. A probable source of infection was a potential contact with wild birds or with their faeces. The infected flock had contact with the poultry in a neighbouring yard separated by the fence and the latter flock (50 laying hens and one guinea fowl), was identified as a contact holding.

On 13th April, the culling of all remaining poultry on the infected holding (20 heads of laying hens) and all poultry on the contact holding (51 heads – 48 laying hens, 2 roosters, 1 guinea fowl) was completed. The culled birds, poultry products, feeding stuffs and by-products were then disposed of. All culled animals as well as 272 eggs for consumption of *Gallus Gallus* were immediately transported to rendering plants and destroyed. After the culling on 13th April, the preliminary disinfection of range, henhouse and other materials which could have come into contact with the virus was immediately performed. The completion of mechanical cleaning and final disinfection was carried out by an authorised company on 24th April 2018.

II. Control measures and intensified surveillance in response to the outbreak

In order to prevent the spread of the virus and for the eradication of the disease, the RVA ordered emergency veterinary measures and established a protection zone (3 km radius) and a surveillance zone (10 km radius) around the outbreak. All measures taken by the State veterinary administration were in accordance with EU legislation (Council Directive 92/66/EEC¹). In the protection and surveillance zones, the banning of poultry/birds exhibitions and markets as well as the release of birds for restocking and movement restrictions were applied until 14th May 2018.

¹ Council Directive 92/66/EEC: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:01992L0066-20080903&qid=1528448102817&from=CS>



In the protection and surveillance zones, official checks in selected poultry holdings and backyards were performed during the three month period after the confirmation of the outbreak. The objective of the official controls was to check the health status of birds as well as the preventive measures and biosecurity at these farms. No clinical signs or high mortality were found. One commercial broiler farm was located in the surveillance zone. By the end of the fattening and as part of the clinical surveillance, poultry were slaughtered few days after ND confirmation and official clinical inspection of broilers was performed; no clinical signs were found. The official check of new delivered poultry from 14th May to this farm found no clinical signs or increased mortality. On 11th June official samples were taken for serological testing by NRL with negative results. The Czech surveillance programme and strategy in order to demonstrate freedom is in accordance with Articles 10.9.22. to 10.9.26. of the OIE *Terrestrial Animal Health Code* (the *Terrestrial Code*).

Passive surveillance for ND is in place since 2005 - early warning system. According to the Veterinary Act No 166/1999 Coll . as amended, all farmers have to report disease suspicions (high mortality or clinical signs) to the competent authority. Farmers with commercial holdings have the obligation to record the changes in poultry health according to the Veterinary Act and Decree No 342/2012, Coll . In case of unusual changes in poultry health, farmers have to contact the competent authority. The following changes in poultry health are mandatory to be notified:

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

Except passive surveillance, active surveillance was introduced during the three months' period with stamping out policy and preliminary disinfection in line with Articles 10.9.25 and 10.9.26. The active surveillance included official checks in the poultry holdings in the protection and surveillance zones

selected on the basis of risk analysis. The risk factors were for example: the farms without fence protection, the farms with ND unvaccinated poultry, the farms with poultry of different age groups or different poultry species, etc. Serological testing in the mentioned commercial farms in the protection zone was performed. During official inspections, no clinical signs or high mortality were found; no further suspected cases were notified during the three months' period.

III. Measures for maintenance of status

Compulsory notification for all animals keepers is requested in Article 11 of Veterinary act No166/1999². Early warning system is in place. Farmers with commercial holdings have to record the changes in poultry health according to the Veterinary Act and in Decree No 342/2012 Coll³, and have to notify changes in poultry health, drop in feed and water intake, drop in egg production or higher mortality. Vaccination against ND is performed on the whole territory of the Czech Republic. Vaccination against ND is mandatory for all registered holding with breeding flocks of *Gallus Gallus* (with more than 100 birds) and all registered holding with laying hens of *Gallus Gallus* (with more than 500 birds). This obligation for farmers is laid down in accordance with Veterinary Act, documented in "Methodology of Animal Health Control and Ordered Vaccination". This "Methodology" is approved by the Ministry of Agriculture and determines rules for vaccination. On the farms where vaccination was performed, the keepers have the obligation to keep records of vaccination for a total five years from the date of vaccination. During the official checks the keeper has the obligation to submit such evidence to the official veterinarian. Such obligations are in line with paragraph 5 i) of Veterinary Act.

Newcastle disease is notifiable on the whole territory of Czech Republic in line with Veterinary Act No 166/1999 Coll. as amended, paragraph 11 and annex 2. On the territory of Czech Republic, farmers have the obligation to notify any suspicion and appearance of high mortality. After the notification, the official checks are performed. During the official checks, an epidemiological investigation is performed and samples are taken for laboratory testing to exclude or confirm ND. Until the completion of laboratory tests, the holding is under restrictive measures. In case of positive results, a stamping out policy is applied. Passive surveillance is still in place since 2005.

Detailed information related to ND situation in Czech Republic, in Europe (ADNS⁴) and from third countries (from WAHIS) and implementation of appropriate measures are regularly provided by publications on the State veterinary administration (SVA) website. The present health situation and level of biosecurity measures in place were also announced by a press release, an official SVA letter to various concerned organisations, publication of articles in breeders' magazines and through professional journals.

The Organisations and persons concerned are: The Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Health, breeding associations, the Chamber of veterinarians, private veterinarians, the Veterinary and pharmaceutical university, the Army of Czech Republic, the Policy of Czech Republic, the Firefighters of Czech Republic, the Central disease commission, the Union of Czech and Slovak zoological garden, regional offices, Rescue station for handicap animals, various breeders' organisations, etc.

In the framework of the awareness programme, the leaflet for general public and back-yard breeders was elaborated.

² Veterinary Act No 166/1999. http://eagri.cz/public/web/mze/legislativa/pravni-predpisy-mze/tematicky-prehled/Legislativa-MZe_uplna-zneni_zakon-1999-166-viceoblasti.html

³ Decree No 342/2012 Coll. - http://eagri.cz/public/web/mze/legislativa/pravni-predpisy-mze/tematicky-prehled/Legislativa-MZe_uplna-zneni_vyhlasaka-2012-342.html

⁴ Animal Disease Notification System (European Commission): https://ec.europa.eu/food/animals/animal-diseases/not-system_en

The media also showed their interest on the disease situation. SVA actively communicated with all media on central and regional levels.

During the above mentioned official checks, the farmers were informed of the disease situation and necessary biosecurity measures.

IV. Conclusions

Considering that:

- Prior to the occurrence of a new outbreak in April 2018, Czech Republic was free from Newcastle disease;
- Mandatory vaccination against ND for all registered holding with breeding flocks of *Gallus Gallus* (with more than 100 birds) and all registered holding with laying hens of *Gallus Gallus* (with more than 500 birds) was performed on the whole territory of Czech Republic;
- Stamping policy was applied (including cleaning-up and disinfection of all the affected establishments) and completed on 24 April 2018;
- Three months have elapsed as stipulated in Article 10.9.3. of the OIE *Terrestrial Code* since the end of the clean-up and disinfection operations;
- Surveillance has been performed in accordance with Articles 10.9.22. to 10.9.26. of the OIE *Terrestrial Code* during that three-month period.

The OIE Delegate of Czech Republic declares that the country complies with the requirements for a country free from infection with Newcastle disease as of 24 July 2018, in compliance with Chapter 1.6. and Articles 10.9.2. and 10.9.3. of the OIE *Terrestrial Code* and in accordance with the information provided in WAHIS.