AVIAN INFLUENZA (AI) IN THE NETHERLANDS, BELGIUM AND GERMANY

Q AND A BRIEF

AI - General

Q1. What is AI?

A. AI is a highly infectious and normally fatal virus disease of birds. The virus exists in a number of different forms ranging from severe to relatively mild. Certain wild birds particularly aquatic fowl commonly carry the milder forms. A major concern is that mild forms can easily mutate into severe forms, and this appears to be more common when the virus infects domestic poultry species.

Q2. How is AI spread?

A. Birds pass the virus in their droppings, and it may be spread for example on people's shoes or car tyres.

Q3. Is AI notifiable in GB?

A. Yes. The last outbreak in poultry occurred here in 1992 and it affected only one premises.

Q4. Is there any link between AI and the recent outbreak of coronavirus associated with Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome?

A. No. There is no link between the recently isolated coronavirus associated with SARS and AI, which is caused by an orthomyxovirus.

IAHD
13 June 2003
**AI in the Netherlands**

**Q1. Has AI been confirmed in the Netherlands?**

A. Yes. The disease was confirmed on 4 March 2003.

**Q2. What measures has the Government taken to protect the UK from introduction of AI.**

A. On 3 March 2003 we issued a Declaration under Regulation 27 of the Animals and Animal Products (Import and Export) (England and Wales) Regulations 2000 making it a criminal offence to import live poultry and their hatching eggs from the Netherlands.

On 14 March 2003 a Declaration was issued under Regulation 27 of the Animals and Animal Products (Import and Export) (England and Wales) Regulations 2000 making it a criminal offence to import show or racing pigeons from the Netherlands. We are concerned that such pigeons from the Netherlands could introduce Avian Influenza to England. Disease may subsequently be spread from pigeons to the wild bird population or to poultry in England.

On 11 April 2003 we issued a Declaration under Article 35 of Products of Animal Origin (Import and Export) Regulations 1996 (as amended) was issued to prohibit the import into England of fresh unprocessed and unpasteurised poultry manure or litter from the Netherlands.

On 16 May 2003 we issued a Declaration under Regulation 35 of the Products of Animal Origin (Import and Export) Regulations 1996 (as amended) prohibiting the import into England of cull day old chicks.

Similar Declarations have been introduced in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

**Q3. Have there been any developments since the ban was introduced on the import from the Netherlands into the UK of live poultry and hatching eggs?**

A. Since AI was confirmed in the Netherlands the EU Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health (SCoFCAH) has met several times to consider whether the controls within the Netherlands and the trade safeguard measures are sufficient. As a new outbreak was suspected on 10 April (and subsequently confirmed) in Dutch Limbourg on the Belgian/German border, these countries have imposed strict biosecurity measures. Commission Decision 2003/258/EC was adopted on 8 April 2003 increasing the restrictions in the Netherlands that had been previously relaxed.

On 28 May SCoFCAH again met to discuss the AI situation in the Netherlands. No further outbreaks have been reported or suspected since 29 April 2003 in commercial flocks and since 7 May 2003 in backyard flocks.
Q4. Can fresh poultry meat, poultry meat products and table eggs be imported into GB from the Netherlands?

A. Fresh poultry meat can be exported from the Netherlands to other EU Member States provided that it is not derived from premises within a surveillance zone around a disease outbreak.

Poultry meat products can be exported from the Netherlands to other EU Member States provided they have been derived from premises outside disease surveillance zones, or have been heat treated in the manner laid down in Annex III to Directive 2002/99/EC.

European Union disease control Regulations prevent the collection of table eggs from infected farms and require bio-security measures, including disinfection of vehicles, in protection zones around such premises. In fact the Dutch and Belgian Authorities have gone beyond these statutory requirements and undertaken precautionary culls of commercial flocks around affected holdings. Obviously no table eggs have been collected from the cull zones.

Q5. Has the Government taken any extra measures to prevent the importation of poultry meat/poultry meat products from the Netherlands?

A. No. However, Community legislation does not permit trade in fresh poultry meat if it was obtained from poultry originating in established surveillance zones. Officials will review the situation as necessary.

Q6. Has the Government taken any measures to prevent the importation of table eggs from the Netherlands?

A. Table eggs do not present a high risk of spread of disease. Any risk would be of mechanical transmission of virus on eggs, packaging or means of transport. Controls in force in the Netherlands provide good safeguards against this risk and a ban on imports would be disproportionate. Officials will review the situation as necessary.

Q7. Has the Government taken any measures to prevent the importation of cull day old chicks from the Netherlands?

A. On 16 May, the Government banned the importation into the UK of cull day old chicks from the Netherlands.

Q8. What is the Dutch government doing following the recent death of a veterinarian?

A. Following the death of a Dutch vet on 17 April, the Dutch Government launched an independent inquiry. The main questions were whether the preventive measures (hygiene, a flu vaccination and antiviral agents) and their implementation were satisfactory, and whether the veterinarian received adequate medical care.
As a result of the veterinarian’s death, new precautions have been taken. Antiviral agents have been provided to people who were in direct contact with the veterinarian and his family, as well as the attending physicians and nurses. These people have also been examined for signs of infection, but so far, all the results have been negative. The latest Commission Decision introducing disease control measures in the Netherlands contains a specific article dealing with measures for the protection of public health.

**Q9. Is there any provision for vaccinating rare or endangered birds in the affected area of the Netherlands?**

A. Yes. On 16 May a Commission Decision was agreed. In order to protect rare birds in Zoos and other approved establishments, the veterinary Authorities of Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany (State of North-Rhine-Westphalia) may decide to carry out emergency Vaccination against AI of birds in such premises.

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13 June 2003
**Al in Belgium**

**Q1. Has Al been confirmed in Belgium?**

A. Yes. On 18 April 2003 the Belgian Veterinary Authorities confirmed outbreak of Al in Belgium, in a poultry holding located in the Municipality of Meeuwen-Gruitrode, 5 kilometres from the border with the Netherlands.

**Q2. What measures has the Government taken to protect the UK from introduction of Al?**

A. On 17 April 2003 we issued a Declaration under Regulation 27 of the Animals and Animal Products (Import and Export) (England and Wales) Regulations 2000 making it a criminal offence to import live poultry, their hatching eggs and racing/show pigeons from the Belgium. We are concerned that such pigeons from Belgium could introduce Al to England. Disease may subsequently be spread from pigeons to the wild bird population or to poultry.

On 17 April 2003 a separate Declaration was issued to prohibit the import into England of fresh, unprocessed and non-heat-treated poultry manure or litter from Belgium (Article 35 of Products of Animal Origin (Import and Export) Regulations 1996 (as amended)).

On 16 May 2003 we issued a Declaration under Regulation 35 of the Products of Animal Origin (Import and Export) Regulations 1996 (as amended) prohibiting the import into England of cull day old chicks.

As there had been no further outbreaks as at 26 May, restrictions on the whole country were lifted on 30 May. At that time restrictions on the importation of fresh, unprocessed and non-heat-treated poultry manure or litter and cull day old chicks were put in place in respect of the Provinces of Antwerp and Limburg only.

Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have also introduced similar measures.

**Q3. Do the restrictions apply to the whole of Belgium?**

A. No. The EU Commission has now lifted the restrictions on the export of live poultry and hatching eggs from Belgium except from the Provinces of Antwerp and Belgian Limburg, which remain under restriction for the time being.

On 30 May 2003, we issued a declaration under Regulation 27 of the Animals and Animal Products (Import and Export) (England and Wales) Regulations 2000 removing import restriction from the whole of Belgium, and making it a criminal offence to import live poultry, their hatching eggs and racing/show pigeons from the Provinces of Antwerp and Limburg in Belgium.
Restrictions on the import of fresh, unprocessed and non-heat-treated poultry manure or litter and cull day old chicks now apply to the Provinces of Antwerp and Limburg only.

Q4. Is there any provision for vaccinating rare or endangered birds in Belgium?

A. Yes. On 16 May a Commission Decision was agreed. In order to protect rare birds in Zoos and other approved establishments, the veterinary Authorities of Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany (State of North-Rhine-Westphalia) may decide to carry out emergency Vaccination against AI of birds in such premises.

Q5. Can fresh poultry meat, poultry meat products and table eggs be imported into the UK from Belgium?

A. Fresh poultry meat can be exported from Belgium to other EU Member States provided that it is not derived from premises within a surveillance zone around a disease outbreak.

Poultry meat products can be exported from Belgium to other EU Member States provided they have been derived from premises outside disease surveillance zones, or have been heat treated in the manner laid down in Annex III to Directive 2002/99/EC.

Table eggs may be exported from Belgium provided that they are transported either in disposable packaging or in trays and other equipment that is cleaned and disinfected before and after each use.

Q6. Has the Government taken any extra measures to prevent the importation of poultry meat/poultry meat products from Belgium?

A. No. However, Community legislation does not permit trade in fresh poultry meat if it was obtained from poultry originating in established surveillance zones. Officials will review the situation as necessary.

Q7. Has the Government taken any measures to prevent the importation of table eggs from Belgium?

A. Table eggs do not present a high risk of spread of disease. Any risk would be of mechanical transmission of virus on eggs, packaging or means of transport. Controls in force in Belgium provide good safeguards against this risk and a ban on imports would be disproportionate. Officials will review the situation as necessary.
Q8. Has the Government taken any measures to prevent the importation of cull day old chicks from Belgium?

A. On 16 May, the Government banned the importation into the UK of cull day old chicks from Belgium. As there had been no new outbreaks in Belgium, on 30 May restrictions on the whole country were lifted. Restrictions are now in place in respect of the Provinces of Antwerp and Limburg only.

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13 June 2003
AI in Pigs

Q1. Is there much trade in live pigs from Belgium and the Netherlands?

A. The import of live pigs from Belgium is very small. Only 18 pigs for breeding have been imported since 2000. No live pigs have been imported from the Netherlands in the Period 2000 to date.

Q2. Has the current outbreak of AI in the Netherlands led to infections in pigs?

A. No. There is no evidence of the virus spreading in the pig population.

Q3. Can we be confident on the import of live pigs.

A. Tests in the Netherlands have shown that pigs on farms with infected poultry may pick the Avian Influenza virus and quickly develop antibodies. There is no evidence of infection developing in pigs on farms without infected poultry, and there has been no evidence of transmission of the virus from Pigs to pig.

Q4. How did the rumour of infection in pigs arise?

A. Evidence of seroconversion to H7N7 AI in pigs on holdings in which poultry had been infected in the Netherlands led to concern that active infection could become established in pigs. However, further detailed studies by the Dutch Authorities have indicated that these are almost certainly false positive results. No virus has been isolated from the apparently seropositive pigs, and there has been no spread of infection to other pigs.

Q5. Has the Dutch Government carried out any tests in the infected pigs?

A. Yes. On 25 April 2003 we received the first results of the serological screening carried out in pigs. The results indicated that the test has a specificity of about 97%. The Dutch authorities have applied the following measures;

- Pigs from mixed (poultry and Pigs) holding located in zones restricted due AI will only be allowed to be moved to other pig farms within the same ‘compartment’ of the NL (this measure is also applied to other bi-ungulates kept in holdings with poultry)
- Pigs from non-mixed holdings will not be subjected to particular restrictions.

Q6. Have the Dutch lifted the transport ban for pigs in protection and surveillance zones?

A. Yes. On the basis of the lack of further seroconversion in pigs on affected farms, the Dutch Authorities considered that there was no need for the transport ban on pigs in protection and surveillance zones.
Q7. Do the latest Commission Decisions concerning AI in Belgium and the Netherlands require serological testing of pigs on farms with infected poultry and controls on seropositive pigs?

A. Yes. The situation will be kept under review by the Commission and affected Member States.

Q8. Does the UK Government have any plans to restrict the import of pigs from the Netherlands?

A. As there is no evidence that pigs are carrying the AI virus, there is no basis to restrict the import of pigs from the Netherlands. All imports from the EU Member States including the Netherlands already have to meet strict health requirements as required in Council Directive 64/432/EEC.

IAHD
13 June 2003
**Avian Influenza in Germany**

**Q1. Have the restrictions in Germany been lifted?**

A. Yes. Since no further cases have been reported, the European Commission has lifted restrictions from the area of the Land on North Rhine-Westphalia to the east of the Rhine in Germany. The area to the west of the Rhine in the land of North Rhine-Westphalia remains under restrictions.

**Q2. What action has the UK Government taken to protect against the importation of Avian Influenza from Germany?**

A. On 9 May 2003 we issued a Declaration under Regulation 27 of the Animals and Animal Products (Import and Export) (England and Wales) Regulations 2000 making it a criminal offence to import live poultry, ratites and their hatching eggs from the region of North Rhine-Westphalia in Germany. Similar Declarations have been introduced in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

On 16 May 2003 we issued a Declaration to prohibit the import into England of fresh, unprocessed and non-heat-treated poultry manure or litter from region of North Rhine-Westphalia in Germany (Article 35 of Products of Animal Origin (Import and Export) Regulations 1996 (as amended)).

On 16 May 2003 we issued a Declaration under Regulation 35 of the Products of Animal Origin (Import and Export) Regulations 1996 (as amended) prohibiting the import into England of cull day old chicks.

As there had been no further outbreaks as at 2 June, restrictions on the Land of North Rhine-Westphalia were reduced on 4 June. At that time, restrictions on the importation of fresh, unprocessed and non-heat-treated poultry manure or litter and cull day old chicks were put in place in respect of the Land of North Rhine-Westphalia located west of the Rhine only.

**Q3. Can fresh poultry meat, poultry meat products and table eggs be imported into the UK from Germany?**

A. Fresh poultry meat can be exported from Germany to other EU Member States provided that it is not derived from premises within a surveillance zone around a disease outbreak.

Poultry meat products can be exported from Germany to other EU Member States provided they have been derived from premises outside disease surveillance zones, or have been heat treated in the manner laid down in Annex III to Directive 2002/99/EC.

Table eggs may be exported from Germany provided that they are transported either in disposable packaging or in trays and other equipment that is cleaned and disinfected before and after each use.
Q4. Has the Government taken any extra measures to prevent the importation of poultry meat/poultry meat products from Germany?

A. No. However, Community legislation does not permit trade in fresh poultry meat if it was obtained from poultry originating in established surveillance zones. Officials will review the situation as necessary.

Q5. Has the Government taken any measures to prevent the importation of table eggs from Germany?

A. Table eggs do not present a high risk of spread of disease. Any risk would be of mechanical transmission of virus on eggs, packaging or means of transport. Controls in force in Germany provide good safeguards against this risk and a ban on imports would be disproportionate. Officials will review the situation as necessary.

Q6. Is there any provision for vaccinating rare or endangered birds in the affected area of Germany?

A. Yes. On 16 May a Commission Decision was agreed. In order to protect rare birds in Zoos and other approved establishments, the veterinary Authorities of Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany (State of North-Rhine-Westphalia) may decide to carry out emergency Vaccination against AI of birds in such premises.

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