



agriculture, forestry & fisheries

Department:
Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MEDIA STATEMENT

11 JULY 2017

UPDATE ON AVIAN INFLUENZA H5N8 OUTBREAK IN SOUTH AFRICA

The HPAI H5N8 virus was confirmed in two further locations in South Africa, bringing the total of affected properties to four. The new locations involved commercial layer chickens on farms in Gauteng and Mpumalanga.

The two farms were immediately placed under quarantine by the state Veterinarian. The quarantine includes, as a minimum, a prohibition of the movement of chickens and chicken products onto and off the farm. The necessary measures have been taken to contain and eliminate the disease as efficiently as possible on both farms.

Forward tracing was done and cull chicken depots were identified, which had received live cull chickens from one of the affected farms in the last 21 days. The records of these cull depots are being followed up to trace as many of these chickens as possible. The new Poultry Disease management Agency (PDMA) system of registration of persons buying and selling live chickens made it possible to trace these culls.

The PDMA registration process of sellers and traders of live chickens has progressed well and a number of initial challenges were ironed out. All role players in the poultry industry involved in the buying and selling of live chickens are strongly encouraged to comply with the registration and other requirements that are designed to allow the trade of live chickens to continue without compromising animal health.

The depopulation of the two poultry sites affected in June is complete. The carcasses, waste material, affected eggs and manure have been contained and will be dealt with to ensure prevention of spread of the disease, as well as to prevent contamination of the environment.

Export of chickens and chicken products from registered HPAI free compartments is continuing to countries that accept guarantees from such compartments. There is good cooperation from registered compartments to increase the testing frequency to monthly testing.

Exports of raw meat, eggs and live birds from South Africa to some trade partners have been disrupted, as one of requirements for the certification is country freedom from Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza, which cannot be provided since 22 June 2017. The export of products, which had been processed to ensure destruction of the virus, is also continuing, unless the trade partner has raised an objection.

The H5N8 virus does not affect humans, Department of Health through the National Institute of Communicable Diseases tested workers from the affected farms and no human cases have been detected.

The HPAI H5N8 viruses that have been isolated from these outbreaks are similar to the viruses isolated from Zimbabwe in June 2017 and from Egypt in 2016, which makes the likelihood of the involvement of wild birds high. Chicken owners and farmers are encouraged to prevent contact of their chickens with wild birds as much as possible.

Increased surveillance in wild birds, commercial chickens and backyard chickens is continuing. Chicken owners, farmers and the public should remain vigilant and all cases of high mortalities in chickens and other birds should be reported to the nearest State Veterinarian.

The public is advised to avoid any gathering of chickens for shows, auctions and similar activities. However, should such activities continue, the organizers are advised to liaise with the State Veterinary Authorities and the auction houses must also be registered with the PDMA.

Media enquiries

Ms Bomikazi Molapo

0788013711

BomikaziM@daff.go.za