



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**  
HEALTH & CONSUMERS DIRECTORATE-GENERAL

Unit 04 - Veterinary Control Programmes

**SANCO/12952/2010**

*Programmes for the eradication, control and monitoring of certain  
animal diseases and zoonoses*

**Survey programme for Avian Influenza in  
poultry and wild birds**

**Approved\* for 2011 by Commission Decision 2010/712/EU**

**Malta**

\* in accordance with Council Decision 2009/470/EC

**Program for Eradication : ANNEX 4**

Submission number	1272619391399-332
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Country Geographical English Name	Malta

<b>1. Identification of the programme</b>	
Country Geographical English Name	Malta
Disease	avian influenza in poultry and wild birds
Request co-financing from	2011
Request co-financing to	2011
<b>1.1 Contact</b>	
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**2. Description of the surveillance programme in poultry****2.1 Objectives, general requirements and criteria**

The objective of the programme includes:

- Achieving harmonization with other EU countries in veterinary control and surveillance programmes;
- The strengthening of veterinary epidemiological surveillance measures in accordance with EU legislation;
- Ensuring the early recognition of sub clinical infections of Low Pathogenic Avian Influenza within the local animal population;
- The rapid implementation of investigation protocols with all relevant restrictions on the movement of animals and animal products coming into force until confirmatory results are received.
- Contribute to achieving a disease free status for Malta from notifiable Avian Influenza
- To conform to community legislation with regards the surveillance of avian influenza in poultry and wild birds EC/94/2005.
- To enhance the surveillance of Avian influenza in wild bird species through increased collaboration with hunting organisations and conservation groups.

**2.2 Design and implementation**

- Sampling shall take place between January and December 2010. For poultry flocks sampling shall be carried out during the relevant production periods.
- Samples shall be tested at the National Veterinary Laboratory in Malta using ELISA and any positive samples sent to the CRL for confirmatory testing.
- Any Confirmed positive holdings will be retrospectively investigated by the Veterinary Regulation, Fisheries Conservation and Control Division.

**2.2.1 Poultry holdings (except ducks and geese) to be sampled**

Category	NUTS (2) (a)	Total number of holdings	Total number of holdings to be sampled	Number of samples per holding	Total number of tests to be performed per method	Method of laboratory analysis
Laying hens	Malta	47	47	20	940	ELISA test
	<b>Malta</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>940</b>	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>940</b>	

**2.2.2 Duck and geese holdings to be sampled according to point C of Annex I to Decision 2007/268/EC Serological investigation**

NUTS (2) (a)	Total number of duck and geese holdings	Total number of duck and geese holdings to be sampled	Number of samples per holding	Total number of tests to be performed per method	Method of laboratory analysis
Malta	0	0	0	0	NA
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	

**2.3 Laboratory testing: description of the laboratory tests used**

- The initial screening of the blood samples will be carried out at the National Veterinary Laboratory of the Veterinary Regulation Fisheries Conservation and Control Division using the IDEXX ELISA kits.
- Any positive samples to the ELISA screening test will be sent to the Community Reference Laboratory for avian influenza in Weybridge, UK;
- Virus isolation and PCR on faecal and tracheal samples from wild birds shall be carried out by the Community reference laboratory for avian influenza in Weybridge, UK.

**3. Description of the surveillance programme in wild birds**

**3.1 Objectives, general requirements and criteria**

The objectives of the programme are to maintain vigilance for the appearance of strains of Avian Influenza in local and migratory wild bird species through active and passive surveillance.

Around 380 species have been recorded in the islands. About 50 are winter visitors, 112 more or less regular migrants and the rest rare or irregular migrants or vagrants. The presence of birds in summer months is rather low with the peak of activity attained in spring and autumn. Although there is a consistent migration of birds throughout the islands in both seasons, weather conditions greatly affect the numbers of migrants. On some days during migration the islands may experience a large influx of birds, while at other times there may be very little movement in evidence.

The migrants include both species that winter south of the Sahara and those that go no further than the Mediterranean basin. During late summer, herons, raptors, waders, hirundines, several warblers and chats are present on the island.

These increase dramatically in September and October. In November the migration of trans-Saharan migrants is over and replaced by influxes of the wintering species, some waterfowl and plovers, finches and other passerines.

In spring a similar progression, but in reverse order, can be observed between early March and late May. Hoopoes, Marsh Harriers, Grey and Night Herons and Swallows and Martins in transit are amongst the first to appear in Spring. They are followed by small passerines such as Subalpine, Great Reed and Icterine Warblers and later by Golden Orioles, Bee Eaters, Woodchat Shrikes and the occasional Roller.

**3.2 Design and implementation**

**3.2.1 WILD BIRDS - Investigation according to the surveillance programme for avian influenza in wild birds set out in Annex II to Decision 2007/268/EC**

NUTS (2) code/region (a)	Wild birds to be sampled	Total number of birds to be sampled	Estimated total number of samples to be taken for active surveillance	Estimated total number of samples to be taken for passive surveillance
Malta	Waterfowl	100	50	50
Malta	Shorebirds	40	20	20
Malta	Others	10	5	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>#SYNTAX</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>75</b>

**3.3 Laboratory testing: description of the laboratory tests used**

- Virus isolation and PCR on faecal, cloacal and tracheal samples from wild birds shall be carried out by the Community Reference Laboratory for avian influenza in Weybridge, UK.
- Swabs will be dispatched by fast courier to the CRL under suitable conditions to ensure the survival of the virus if this is present in the sample.

**4. Description of the epidemiological situation of the disease in poultry during the last five years**

**Surveillance programme 2002**

In 2002 an EU funded epidemiological survey was carried out on the poultry population of Malta and Gozo. Sampling was carried out at slaughter houses in most of the cases. All the 139 farms tested were negative. In total 1680 samples were tested in 2002.

**Surveillance programme 2003**

No AI surveillance was carried out in 2003

**Surveillance programme 2004**

A total of 38 poultry holdings were sampled and tested in 2004. A total of 341 birds were tested using IDEXX ELISA. Thirty of the sera were sent to the CRL for confirmatory tests. None of the holdings or samples tested were positive.

**Surveillance programme 2005**

A total of 63 poultry farms in Malta and 9 farms in Gozo were tested during the surveillance programme carried out during 2005. The blood samples were tested locally using the IDEXX kit for avian influenza. Samples from 33 holdings in Malta and 3 in Gozo gave positive results. These were sent to the CRL for AI in Weybridge, UK for confirmation using the haemagglutination-inhibition tests for H5/H7. All samples resulted negative to the confirmatory test.

**Surveillance programme 2006**

The surveillance of poultry flocks was similar to that for the year 2005. An intensification of the number of samples from poultry holdings has been undertaken. The number of holdings sampled in 2006 was 71, while the number of birds sampled was 1239.

**Surveillance programme 2007**

In 2007, 74 layer holdings were sampled. A total of 709 samples were collected and tested during this year.

None of the samples tested in 2007 tested positive for Avian Influenza.

**Surveillance programme 2008**

In 2008 layer holdings were sampled and tested using IDEXX ELISA kits. A total of 276 samples were collected and tested

**4. Description of the epidemiological situation of the disease in poultry during the last five years**  
during this year.

None of the samples tested in 2008 tested positive for Avian Influenza.

Surveillance programme 2009

The surveillance of poultry flocks was similar to that of the previous years. Layer flocks were sampled and tested by the National Veterinary Laboratory using IDEXX ELISA kits. The number of samples collected and tested in 2009 was 683.

**4.1.1 Designation of the central authority in charge of supervising and coordinating the departments responsible for implementing the programme**

Designation of the central authority in charge of supervising and coordinating the departments responsible for implementing the programme

The Agriculture and Fisheries Regulation Division, Albetown, Marsa is responsible for the programme. The National Veterinary Laboratory is responsible for testing and dispatch of samples to the CRL.

**4.1.2 System in place for the registration of holdings**

System in place for the registration of holdings

There is no direct national legislation obliging egg-laying flock holders to register their farm. However other regulations request commercial egg producers to have an approval mark and compensation schemes indirectly enforce the registration of egg-laying farms. There is the Egg Marking Regulation 345/2003 which requires that all eggs sold at retail level, excluding those sold directly to the consumers on farm, have to be marked by a unique identity number. This unique number is issued by the competent authority, which is the AFRD. The control at retail level falls under the supervision of the Environmental Health Department which falls under the Directorate of Public Health under the Ministry of Social Policy.

Farms not registered with the competent authority can not be given this unique identity number.

There is also the Special Marketing Policy Programme Maltese Agriculture (SMPPMA) which entitles only registered business operators to a refund of 16 euro cents per dozen eggs sold.

- There are no turkey flocks on the Island
- There are no breeding parent flock on the Island.
- There are no free-range farms or outdoor holdings.
- The layer flocks are all multi-age systems with a minimum production period of 1.5 years to a maximum of 3 years.
- Ratites, ducks, quails and pheasants are not bred or reared commercially in Malta.
- A registration of backyard flocks of poultry and waterfowl in the Maltese territory was carried out during October 2005.

**4.1.3 Data on vaccination carried out**

No vaccination for AI is carried out in the Maltese Islands

**5. Description of the epidemiological situation of the disease in wild birds during the last five years**

Surveillance programme 2005

32 samples were taken from wild birds. Apart from organ samples from two dead birds found on a cargo ship originating from Taiwan, which were tested by viral isolation, all other samples were sera from wild ducks. All samples were sent to the CRL in Weybridge, UK and resulted negative.

Surveillance programme 2006

**5. Description of the epidemiological situation of the disease in wild birds during the last five years**

In 2006 the number of wild ducks and other migratory birds sampled by means of cloacal swabs and/or faecal samples, and sent to the CRL in Weybridge for testing by means of PCR and viral isolation was 90. A number of other wild and semi captive ducks,36, were tested by serology.

**Surveillance programme 2007**

A number Wild ducks and other migratory birds were also sampled by means of cloacal swabs, tracheal swabs and/or faecal samples, which were then sent to the CRL in Weybridge for testing by means of PCR and viral isolation.

**Surveillance programme 2009**

A number of wild birds (19) were sampled by means of cloacal swabs, tracheal swabs and/or faecal samples, which were sent to the CRL in Weybridge for testing by means of PCR and viral isolation. The collaboration with hunting associations, bird conservation groups, bird parks and bird sanctuaries has been maintained. All samples tested negative

**5.1 Measures included in the programme for surveillance in wild birds**

**5.1.1 Designation of the central authority in charge of supervising and coordinating the departments responsible for implementing the programme**

Agriculture and Fisheries Regulation Division, Albertown, Marsa.

**5.1.2 Description and delimitation of the geographical and administrative areas in which the programme is to be applied**

Description and delimitation of the geographical and administrative areas in which the programme is to be applied

- The surveillance programme will apply to the Islands of Malta and Gozo;
- The two islands are going to be considered as one region

**5.1.3 Estimation of the local and/or migratory wildlife population**

Number of hunted or trapped

Anas acuta 13 Rallus aquaticus 19 Carduelis caduelis 497  
 Anas clypeata 14 Fulica atra 64 Carduelis chloris 2494  
 Anas crecca 62 Pluvialis apricaria 1192 Carduelis spinus 296  
 Anas Penelope 22 Pluvialis squatarola 59 Coccothraustes coccothraustes 94  
 Anas platyrhynchos 38 Vanellus vanellus 97 Fringilla coelebs 3746  
 Anas querquedula 6 Gallinago gallinago 121 Serinus serinus 1599  
 Anas strepera 29 Lymonocryptes minimus 39 Sturnus vulgaris 25348  
 Anser anser 21 Philomachus pugnax 41 Turdus philomelos 39263  
 Anser fabalis 29 Scolopax rusticola 1504 Turdus viscivorus 324  
 Aythya farina 6 Columba palumbus 31 Turdus pilaris 834  
 Aythya fuligula 7 Streptopelia turtur 36675 Carduelis cannabina 14362  
 Mergus serrator 9 Alauda arvensis 24022 Gallinula chloropus 77  
 Coturnix coturnix 18792 Turdus iliacus 543 Turdus merula 573

**6. Measures in place as regards the notification of the disease**

Chapter 437 Articles 5, 6,7,8,9 16, 18, 19, 35 and 37 and the second, third and fifth schedule of the Veterinary Services lay down Local legislation that deals with the notification of Avian Influenza.

**7. Costs**

**7.1.1 Poultry**

Layers

**7.1.2 Wild birds**

Wild birds

**7.2 Summary of the costs**

**7.2.1 Poultry surveillance**

Methods of laboratory analysis	Number of tests to perform per method	Unitary test cost (per method) in €	Total cost (€)
ELISA test	940	2.00	1,880.00
agar gel immune diffusion test	100	9.00	900.00
Haemagglutination-inhibition-test (HI) for H5 (specify number of tests for H5)	100	6.50	650.00
Haemagglutination-inhibition-test (HI) for H7 (specify number of tests for H7)	100	6.50	650.00
Virus isolation test	20	70.00	1,400.00
PCR test	20	30.00	600.00
NA	0	0.00	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,280</b>	<b>124.00</b>	<b>6,080.00</b>

**7.2.2 Wild bird surveillance**

Methods of laboratory analysis	Number of tests to perform per method	Unitary test cost (per method) in €	Total cost (€)
Haemagglutination-inhibition-test (HI) for H5/H7	0	0.00	0.00
Virus isolation test	150	70.00	10,500.00
PCR test	150	30.00	4,500.00
Other please specify here	0	0.00	0.00
NA	0	0.00	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>15,000.00</b>