



EUVET mission to AUSTRIA on HPAI (Wien and Amstetten Region)

11-13 November 2024

PAFF Committee, 22nd-23rd January 2025

Terms of Reference

- In response to HPAI Epidemiological Situation in Austria
- Experts: Marcel Spierenburg (NL)-Team Leader, Francesco Galuppo (IT)

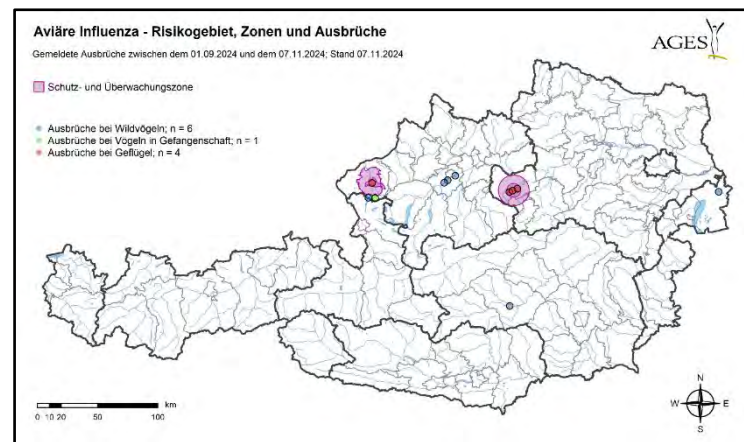
Providing
on the spot assistance

- scientific, technical, managerial and practical aspects on the development and refinement of the most suitable preventive and control measures for HPAI
- especially in the management of surveillance activities, culling operations, manure management, cleansing and disinfections procedures and restocking procedures

Day 1-Entry meeting-Short introduction of the situation and general overview

After the beginning of the wild bird migration period across Europe, HPAI epidemic in European Union Countries started, involving also Austria. At the beginning of October the Amstetten District has been partly flooded along the rivers which had a great attraction on wild birds. In October 07, 2024 the first case of HPAI (H5N1) occurred in Higher Austria commercial poultry farms involving about 120 birds.

On October 28 the first outbreak occurred in Lower Austria Region (Amstetten District). The last update on ADIS system report that till November 13 already 5 outbreaks occurred in Amstetten District. In Amstetten Region (one of the most densely poultry populated areas in Austria) there were about 24000 (backyards and commercial) (on a total of about 93000 in Austria) poultry establishments registered on the National Data Base (VIS Veterinary Information System), including all the categories (farm capacity, species, etc).



BMSGPK

Day 1-Entry meeting- Epidemiological situation

After the confirmation of the outbreak, a restriction zone (Protection 3 km, Surveillance 10 km) and other measures (stamping out, cleaning and disinfection, movements control, disposal of carcasses, byproducts and waste under official control and official controls in the restriction zones) have been established in Amstetten. At the time of the mission in Amstetten district 190 establishments with more than 50 birds were located in these restricted areas. Of this number, 60 had a capacity of more than 1000 birds, 4 of more than 50000. The total number of establishments was about 24000.

In case of epidemic animal disease, a National Crisis Unit (BMSGPK) is responsible for the Crisis Management at the national level, supported at the local level by a Local Crisis Unit (Amstetten District in this case). The local vet of the district is in close communication with National Reference Lab (AGES).




LVA Amstetten



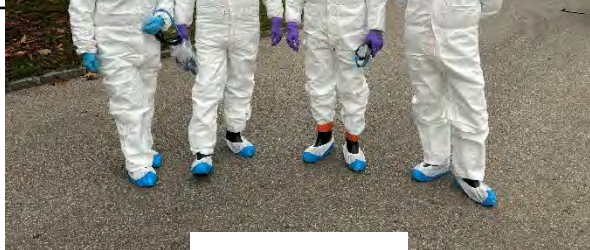
AGES

Day 2-Field visit


Outbreak AT-HPAI(P)-2024-00003 submitted




Country or territory: Austria
 Disease name: High pathogenicity avian influenza viruses (poultry) (Inf. with)
 Disease type: H5N1



Farm entry



The barn



Personal Protection Equipment

ADIS reference	Primary or secondary	Country-Administrative zone	Species	Number of susceptible	Number of cases	Number of dead	Number of killed	Number of slaughtered
AT-HPAI(P)-2024-00003	Primary	AUT-Niederösterreich	Birds (Domestic)	72000	15	15	-	-

High mortality with respiratory symptoms and diarrhea

Day 2-Field visit

- ✓ Free entrance and no fences around the contaminated farm
- ✓ No cleaning and disinfection facilities for means of transport
- ✓ No Farm Hygiene Lock with mandatory Access
- ✓ Not protected storage of manure
- ✓ Farm area pollution with manure
- ✓ Manure storage on the spot from different poultry holdings
- ✓ Not dedicated place for carcasses storage
- ✓ Long time for culling birds (in container) and disposal of carcasses
- ✓ No restriction for visitors /other people to the contaminated area
- ✓ Manure storage on the spot from different poultry holdings
- ✓ Feed storage area (also from other holdings) in the farm close to the manure storage



Poor Level of Biosecurity





Day 1-2-Findings

- ✓ In case of a suspicion of HPAI, the local veterinary Service has not a completely clear overview of the current situation regarding the real number of poultry farms (especially commercial poultry farms).
- ✓ It is not completely clear how (who, when, using which tools) the epidemiological enquiry should be performed.
- ✓ In the farm we visited it was clear that there was a poor level of biosecurity. Also in the first nearest poultry establishments apparently the bad biosecurity situation is the same. The indirect confirmation of this assumption is that there is not a specific dedicated national legislation on biosecurity.



Day 1-2-Findings

- ✓ In the restricted areas since one week already 65 derogations have been issued, apparently without following any specific criteria or risk assessment.
- ✓ There is no clear evidence that a specific procedure was followed to cull the birds and remove the carcasses. In some outbreaks the local Authorities directly performed the culling and in other cases a contract supplier carried out the culling operations on demand action.
- ✓ There is no clear evidence of protocols for the management of carcasses and manure in the HPAI infected establishments and in the other non infected farms in the 3 km and 10 km restriction zones.



Day 1-2-Findings

- ✓ The current Contingency plan for HPAI is 4 years old (2020) and seems that has not been updated taking in account the minimum requirements of AHL.
- ✓ There is no clear evidence of a minimum budget/fund to finance animal disease eradication activities in emergency situations.
- ✓ There is a clear evidence of good procedures under the supervision of AGES to access in safe conditions the outbreak.
- ✓ There is good communication between the local vet authorities in Amstetten, NRL AGES and Central Level BMSGPK.



Day 3-Conclusions and Recommendations



- ✓ Real data about the number of commercial poultry farms and stables including the categories, age, number of birds and (if possible) mortality rates, feed and water intake rates, daily egg production should be directly and immediately available to the local Veterinary Service.
- ✓ The official veterinarian of the local competent authorities must obtain standard information about the suspected farm from the national databases like the registered number of animals, production category, number of stables, establishment registration number, etc., before the farm visit. During the farm visit the local vet investigates the animals and makes already an estimation of volumes of the needed gas (CO₂, N₂ or mixture according to REG. 1099/2009) for the culling and the amount of carcasses to be disposed according to REG. 1069/2009.
- ✓ The general conclusions of the epidemiological contact tracing investigation must be clearer and recorded.
- ✓ Implement mandatory specific biosecurity measures for poultry establishments at the farm level and at the regional level. Implement mandatory assessment on biosecurity compliance at least under the supervision of the QGV and preferably under the supervision of the local official Authorities.



Day 3-Conclusions and Recommendations



- ✓ Consider limiting the activities in the restriction areas (restocking, loading, selling) ensuring the compliance to requirements of the DR 2020/687 and eventually the national biosafety guide lines of the poultry sector and only under active strict surveillance plan.
- ✓ In the restricted zone derogations for movements could be limited only to the establishment which can prove to have approved biosecurity plans designed by the representatives of the poultry sector like QGV under the supervision of the Competent Authorities and after a risk assessment.
- ✓ Prepare in advance in peacetime stand by contracts for suppliers (as part of an updated Contingency Plan) for all the culling activities under the condition of stating immediate availability (preferably within 8-24 hours) and minimum requirements (equipment, trained and vaccinated personnel, gas, etc.)
- ✓ Prepare in advance in peacetime procedures and protocols for the management of carcasses and manure of the infected farms and of the holdings in the restriction zones, as part of an updated Contingency Plan.



Day 3-Conclusions and Recommendations



- ✓ Increase the number of official vets and staff to manage properly (especially in case of long epidemic period with more than one restriction zones) all the aspects of the culling process and the other related activities. Train official vets each year with special concern how to use the personal protection equipment (PPE) in simulation events together with the stakeholders and contract suppliers, following specific rules described in an updated Contingency Plan.
- ✓ Create a dedicate budget for a national animal health fund for eradication of animal diseases for compensation of the farmers and all culling activities.
- ✓ Immediately after the report submission some of the recommendations have been already implemented

Thank you for your attention!

The working atmosphere during the mission was very good. The colleagues from Austria were open-minded and gave all their support and assistance to facilitate a fruitful mission. The EUVET rapporteurs wish to thank all colleagues for their support and help given before and during the whole mission.

