

**INFORMATION ON OUTBREAKS OF THE
AH7N3 AVIAN INFLUENZA VIRUS**

Communication from Mexico

The following communication, received on 10 July 2012, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of Mexico.

1. On 21 June 2012, Mexico's National Agriculture and Food Health, Safety and Quality Service (SENASICA) notified the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) of the presence of the avian influenza virus, type A, subtype H7N3, in commercial poultry production units in the municipalities of Tepatitlán de Morelos and Acatic in the State of Jalisco.

2. In the wake of this outbreak, on Monday 2 July 2012 the Mexican Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Rural Development, Fisheries and Food published the "Agreement activating, integrating and implementing the national animal health emergency mechanism for the purpose of diagnosing, preventing, controlling and eradicating the highly pathogenic avian influenza virus, type A, subtype H7N3". The Agreement was published in accordance with the terms of Article 78 of the Federal Law on Animal Health.

3. The animal health measures applied are as follows:

- (a) Animal health training in avian influenza for poultry farmers and natural and legal persons involved in poultry farming;
- (b) transport restrictions on poultry and poultry products and by-products, as well as on other animal species which are regulated by the Federal Law on Animal Health and the provisions derived therefrom and which could pose a risk to poultry farming;
- (c) establishment of quarantine lines;
- (d) confinement and disposal of poultry and poultry products and by-products, as well as of biological, chemical, pharmaceutical and food products for administration to or consumption by poultry which could cause an outbreak of avian influenza;
- (e) immunization to protect against the disease and prevent its spread;
- (f) quarantine and isolation;
- (g) diagnosis and identification of the avian influenza virus;

- (h) sanitation, disinfection, disinfestation and sterilization of animals, holdings and transport vehicles and use of germicides and pesticides to prevent the spread of the AH7N3 avian influenza virus;
- (i) culling of poultry infected with or exposed to avian influenza;
- (j) elimination of poultry and poultry products and by-products;
- (k) epidemiological surveillance and investigation;
- (l) other animal health measures regulated by the Federal Law on Animal Health, as well as measures which, thanks to modern technology and scientific developments, are effective for the purposes of diagnosing, preventing, controlling and eradicating the AH7N3 avian influenza virus.

4. To date, epidemiological sampling has been conducted on 58 poultry farms in the focal and perifocal areas: 24 infected farms were identified by viral isolation, diagnosis is ongoing in another 24 farms and ten farms have tested negative to the H7N3 highly pathogenic virus.

5. As soon as the emergency occurred and even before requests for such measures were received from the authorities of certain trading partners, exports of poultry products from the affected, quarantined area were restricted so as to prevent risks and to ensure that exports of Mexican products were risk-free.

6. Mexico wishes to clarify that the presence of the avian influenza virus, type A, subtype H7N3, has only been detected in commercial poultry production units in two municipalities in the State of Jalisco. All other entities in the country are free from the virus.

7. It is also important to note that the H7N3 avian influenza virus does not pose a risk to food safety provided that food products are handled and cooked properly. Avian influenza rarely affects human beings; human infection only occurs as a result of specific subtypes and very close contact with affected birds. The aim of the measures is therefore to contain the disease in order to protect poultry production.

8. Mexico requests that WTO Members notify the Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures of any measure imposed on imports of products originating in Mexico, in accordance with the terms of Article 7 of and Annex B to the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures, and comply in full with the other transparency requirements laid down in this Agreement (such as allowing comments).

9. Furthermore, with a view to avoiding greater repercussions on trade in poultry products, Mexico proposes the following:

- Members should adhere to OIE guidelines - which permit the importation of products that have undergone heat treatment to eliminate the virus and which provide for compartmentalization - and take measures restricting imports from the affected municipalities without imposing a ban on exports from the rest of Mexican territory;
- Mexico will continue to issue the relevant reports on disease emergence and resurgence in a proper and timely fashion and to fulfil its OIE commitments, with a view to ensuring the transparency of its animal health status.

- Members with which Mexico does NOT trade in poultry products should refrain from issuing and publishing import bans on Mexican products.

10. This communication is being made for reasons of transparency under Article 7 of the Agreement, and is without prejudice to Mexico's rights under that Agreement.
