

AVIAN INFLUENZA AND FMD STATUS AS OF 1 MARCH 2007

Communication from the Philippines

The following communication, dated 11 April 2007, is being circulated at the request of the Delegation of the Philippines.

1. The Philippines would like to provide the following information with regard to the country's status, management and control of Avian Influenza and Foot-and-Mouth diseases. This paper elaborates on the report made by the Philippines during the SPS Committee meeting on 1 March 2007.

I. AVIAN INFLUENZA (AI)

2. To date, the Philippines remains bird flu-free.

3. The country's authority on AI, the Bureau of Animal Industry of the Department of Agriculture, has tested a representative number of blood samples last year from native/game fowls, chickens and ducks in 16 regions. Disease surveillance covered twenty identified priority areas. All tests yielded negative results for the Avian Flu agent.

4. In view of its bird flu-free status, the Philippines continues to export chicken and chicken products, such as chicken yakitori, breeder day-old chicks, chicken hotdog and chicken franks, to trading partners, mainly in Asia and some in the Middle East and Africa.

5. To keep its bird flu-free status, the Philippines addresses AI threats coming from illegal trade of poultry and exotic birds, migratory bird habitats, and human cases from other countries through the following measures.

A. IMPOSITION OF TEMPORARY BAN ON THE IMPORTATION OF POULTRY AND POULTRY PRODUCTS FROM AI-AFFECTED COUNTRIES

6. The ban covers all poultry products originating from AI-affected countries, including those that are already in transit at the time the ban is declared. This measure involves the following:

- no Veterinary Quarantine Clearance will be issued;
- live birds or eggs will be destroyed;
- processed poultry products will be returned to origin;
- trans-shipment through an AI-affected country is also prohibited.

B. ENFORCEMENT OF THE WILDLIFE ACT

7. This is being led by the Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in coordination with the local government units and the local Philippine National Police. Under this Act, no permits will be issued for poultry wildlife or exotic poultry species from AI-affected countries, and there will be no blood collection of migratory birds, regardless of purpose or collection technique.

C. PREVENTIVE MEASURES IN HUMANS

8. The Department of Health takes care of this concern, under which it is recommended that influenza vaccination should be given for all poultry workers and handlers.

D. UPGRADING AI DIAGNOSTIC CAPABILITY

9. The Philippines has been upgrading the AI diagnostic capabilities of its national laboratory (Philippine Animal Health Centre) and regional laboratories through foreign assistance (including FAO, OIE, NZAID, Japan ODA).

E. PREPAREDNESS FROM THE NATIONAL TO THE LOCAL LEVEL

10. AI Task Forces have been formed at the national, regional, provincial and city/municipal levels to address the threat of AI. Emergency preparedness and response plans are currently being undertaken.

F. INFORMATION, EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION (IEC)

11. IEC awareness campaigns on AI are being maintained. Some IEC materials have been produced through international donors (e.g., USAID, UNICEF). Lectures on the Avian Influenza Protection Program (AIPP) are being conducted to government agencies, NGOs, students, doctors, associations, the private sector and other concerned stakeholders.

G. MINIMUM BIOSECURITY MEASURES

12. These are mostly farm biosecurity measures which include:

- establishment of biosecurity control points (e.g., gates, shower rooms, footbaths, fumigation boxes);
- proper rest period and disinfection between flocks;
- inaccessibility of farms to stray animals and free-flying birds;
- proper disposal of mortalities;
- no raising of domestic ducks and free-range poultry in migratory bird areas, especially in wetlands;
- no mixing of poultry and swine in the same holding facility;
- recording of all movement to and from the facility (e.g., visitors, vehicles, deliveries).

H. SURVEILLANCE AND PREVENTION IN AIRPORTS AND SEAPORTS

13. The following surveillance and prevention measures are being implemented:

- standardized footbath installations and replenishment of disinfectants;
- inspection of luggage/cargo from AI-infected countries;
- confiscation and destruction of unlicensed cargo;
- screening for the AI virus upon arrival at airport or seaport of all imported poultry and poultry products.

I. ESTABLISHMENT OF COMPARTMENTALIZED POULTRY ZONES

14. In case of the occurrence of AI, the Philippines will be divided into eight compartments to:

- set up boundaries to prevent entry, and limit or stop spread of AI;
- facilitate surveillance, detection and control; and
- ensure availability of disease-free production areas for export and local markets.

15. The AIPP Manual of Procedures contains the general guidelines for the prevention and control of AI in the Philippines in Stage 1 (Keeping the Philippines Bird Flu-Free) and Stage 2 (Control and Eradication of Bird Flu in Domestic Fowl).

II. FOOT-AND-MOUTH DISEASE (FMD)

16. Internationally recognized FMD-free zones without vaccination in the Philippines include Mindanao and Visayas-Palawan-Masbate, achieved in 2001 and 2002, respectively. In the main island of Luzon, clinical cases have been eliminated and status zones are applied through appropriate Department of Agriculture Administrative Orders. In addition, the country implements the following measures:

- (a) Animal movement management and disease monitoring and surveillance for FMD are two of the most important components that the Bureau of Animal Industry is implementing through the National FMD Task Force. Regional Quarantine Officers function also as FMD Coordinators to better monitor movement/activities concerning FMD susceptible animals and products. Well-established quarantine checkpoints are strategically located (in ports and highways) to prevent disease incursion to free-areas. FMD-free farm accreditation has been strengthened to ensure only healthy animals are transported to FMD-free areas in Luzon. Likewise, standardization of shipping permits has also been strengthened to prevent traders from transporting FMD susceptible animals indiscriminately.
- (b) To validate that there is no FMD virus circulating in the country, a twice-a-year sero-surveillance is conducted by every Region. Further validation of the findings at the national diagnostic laboratory is also conducted at the World Reference Laboratory in Pirbright. The sero-surveillance is also a useful basis for determining if the vaccine strain currently used is still applicable based on the strain detected from samples taken in the field.

- (c) Moreover, administrative orders and memorandum circulars are in place and are being implemented at the national down to the local levels through their respective local ordinances on the control and eradication of FMD.
