

UPDATE INFORMATION ON AVIAN INFLUENZA

Revision

Statement by Turkey at the Meeting of 1-2 February 2006

Introduction

1. The delegation of Turkey would like to inform the SPS Committee of the latest situation on avian influenza (AI) in Turkey. The previous communication on the AI situation in Turkey was circulated by the Secretariat as G/SPS/GEN/620, dated 19 January 2006.
2. Information on various aspects of the disease is being updated on the web sites both of the General Directorate of Protection and Control (www.kkgm@gov.tr) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (MARA) and of the MARA itself (www.tarim.gov.tr) in Turkish.
3. Turkey has been preparing itself against any outbreaks of AI since 2000. Various scenarios on combating against likely outbreaks of AI were discussed within the Advisory Committee on Animal Health in 2000. In 2001, AI prevention measures were introduced and a regulation was circulated. Surveillance programs and other epidemiological studies at the national level were initiated in 2002 and a contingency plan for AI entered into force in 2005 just a few months earlier than the first outbreak.
4. Following confirmed human cases and four deaths from Avian Influenza, the subtype H5N1 strain, Turkey has been devoting greater attention and serious consideration to the disease. In fact, control measures to prevent the spread of the disease throughout Turkey and simulation practices have been on-going since the first detected case on 15 October 2005.

Recent avian influenza outbreaks in Turkey

5. The AI outbreak was first observed in north-western Anatolia. In this region some swamp areas and lakes host both native wild birds and seasonal migrating birds. The first outbreak of AI was controlled and eventually eradicated, through a series of measures based on the OIE terrestrial animal health code recommendations. Related international organizations, such as the OIE, WHO, FAO, as well as related institutions of the European Union and neighboring countries, were immediately informed of the situation of the outbreak. Measures taken included preventive measures and control and eradication activities.
6. Subsequently, on 15 December 2005, a notification was received of suspected deaths of backyard poultry flock in far-eastern Turkey. Testing of samples taken from the poultry suspected of being infected confirmed the presence of the H5N1 strain of the AI virus. These tests were conducted by the national reference laboratory (Bornova Veterinary Control and Research Institute) on 26 December 2005 and the diagnosis was also confirmed by the Weybridge of England, on 7 January 2006.

7. AI outbreaks were detected in small open-range, backyard poultry flocks and in swamp areas through clinical and post mortem examinations and were confirmed through laboratory examinations by the national reference laboratory. Currently, 67 outbreaks in 31 provinces have been confirmed to be due to the AI virus. While there have been 66 suspected outbreaks in 26 provinces that have not been confirmed as AI positive, these cases have been assumed to be AI positive and preventive and control measures have been implemented to address them. Since the second outbreak on 15 December 2005, around 6.700 samples were examined by competent laboratories in the country and 392 were found to be positive; 66 were assumed to be suspected positive and the rest were negative including 779 samples that were not appropriate for examination and analysis.

8. Diagnosis of the disease at the H5 subtype level can be made in three Veterinary Control and Research Institutes (Bornova in Izmir, Etlik in Ankara and Pendik in Istanbul). Diagnosis by egg inoculations can be carried out in 8 institutions (Bornova, Etlik, Pendik, Konya, Adana, Samsun, Elazig, Erzurum). National reference laboratories are to be provided with Real-Time PCR devices within the capacity enhancement program to enable diagnosis at an advanced level.

9. As of 30 January 2006, within the quarantine and outer zones, 1.596 million birds, almost all from small household establishments, have been slaughtered and buried with lime. All localities where outbreaks have been found to be positive for AI seem to be along migration routes of migrating birds except few swamp areas. AI has not been observed in commercially integrated medium- to large-sized poultry production enterprises in Turkey. The government declared that 10 million hens, that have completed their economical life in egg production establishments, would be culled with partial compensation so as not to be distributed into the small household backyards.

10. Currently, the spread of disease is blocked and the general situation is under control. Detected, confirmed and reported cases have been decreasing considerably within the last two weeks. It has been reported that the quarantine measure were removed in the site where an outbreak was confirmed on 26 December 2005.

Human cases

11. Concerning the human cases, 21 cases have been diagnosed with AI strain H5N1. Four children who were in close contact with infected poultry died, twelve patients recovered, and five other patients are still under treatment in hospitals.

Risk reduction and control interventions

12. Scientific disease prevention and control methods and measures have been on-going since the first outbreak of AI in north-western Anatolia and the second outbreak in eastern Anatolia. Close cooperation and collaboration between the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry and other government bodies have been enhanced. Expert teams have carried out field visits and held follow-up meetings with experts from both national and international institutions. An expert team from relevant international organizations has also carried out field trips and discussed the situation in detail. A specific scientific committee has also been established to make further studies and recommendations on the prevention and control of the disease.

13. Some preliminary actions (which are general practice in any communicable and/or zoonotic disease outbreak) taken prior to the comprehensive risk reduction and control intervention include:

- Immediate arrival at the site where outbreak is reported, notified or observed through various information gathering practices;

- Investigation, observations, identification of infected and dead animals, quick surveillance, sampling for laboratory examinations, assessment of the situation for further work and gathering supportive information for decision making;
- Imposition of temporary quarantine measures including temporary banning of animal movements within the infected site and/or within sites suspected to be infected.;
- Cleaning, disinfection of the site; and
- Dissemination of information and prior notification of the disease to the relevant authority for further action and decision.

14. Risk reduction and control interventions imposed include:

- Establishment of protection zones within a 3 km radius and surveillance zones within a 7 km radius around the infected village and/or premises;
- Stamping out of all susceptible bird animals in the control zone established in a 3 km radius around the outbreak and compensation of the losses. Culling and burial with lime of all animals dead, infected and susceptible of being infected within the control zone in a pit on the ground;
- Disinfection in and around of infected premises and establishments, as well as those premises and establishments suspected of being infected;
- Quarantine and bio-security measures in and around the control and surveillance zones;
- Tightened control of movement of all kind of animals inside the country ; ban on movements of susceptible species in the country and the closure of livestock markets;
- Active surveillance of the wildlife reservations and swamp areas; and
- Continuous clinical and serological surveillance around the outbreaks and/or suspected cases and within the potentially sensitive areas.

Administrative and financial measures

15. Administrative and financial measures taken include:

- Activation of regional and national contingency planning. Implementation of risk management practices;
- Activation of high alert status for national and local disease control centers;
- Establishment of a specific scientific committee on AI;
- Increased and tightened bio-security measures throughout the country;
- Immediate and on-going provision of information about the occurrence of the disease to all related international organizations and neighboring countries;
- Raising of public awareness through all available means of communications, mainly by published and/or broadcast media nationally and regionally;
- Training of technical staff and increasing the capacity of veterinary services through various means including continuous working hours;
- Allocation and mobilization of financial resources, in addition to the existing budgetary allocations; and
- Temporary prohibition of bird hunting in the country until further announcement; and

- Launching measures through all possible means to break the chain of spread of the disease between wild birds, backyard poultry and humans.

Conclusion

16. As clearly stated by some delegations at the informal session of the SPS Committee yesterday, control and eradication of AI is burdensome, costly and requires great efforts. A widely shared opinion is that AI is a global issue and has to be overcome through a responsive and coordinated global effort. Due to the nature, source and the dynamics of the disease, available scientific methods dealing with the disease as well as all the necessary resources should be used simultaneously by national governments and the international community with a view to eventually controlling and eradicating the disease. The first and foremost prerequisite to deal with the disease is to recognize and identify the problem. This underlines once again the importance of transparency and responsiveness in such cases at all likely costs.

Further Enquiries:

Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (MARA)
General Directorate of Protection and Control (GDPC)
Akay Cad. No 3
06100, BAKANLİK LAR – ANKARA

National Enquiry Point

Dr. Durali Koçak
Deputy Director General
Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs
General Directorate of Protection and Control
Tel : + 90. 312. 417 42 76 (PBX)
Fax : + 90. 312. 418 63 18 – 418 65 23
E-mail : sps@kkgm.gov.tr, duralik@kkgm.gov.tr
Internet : www.kkgm.gov.tr

Mustafa Tufan
Director of Veterinary Epidemiology and Information Section
Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs
General Directorate of Protection and Control
Tel : +90. 312. 418 63 17
Fax : +90. 312. 417 82 09
E-mail : mustafat@kkgm.gov.tr
Internet : www.kkgm.gov.tr
