

Animal diseases and public health: measures for the control of avian influenza (repeal. Directive 92/40/EEC)

2005/0062(CNS) - 14/11/2005

The committee adopted the report by Neil PARISH (EPP-ED , UK) amending the proposal under the consultation procedure:

- the competent authorities should be informed immediately of any outbreak, whatever the nature or pathogenicity of the virus that has caused it (i.e. even if it is believed to be Low Pathogenic Avian Influenza - LPAI);
- in the case of suspected or confirmed outbreaks of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), MEPs argued that eggs should not be removed from the holding but instead should be destroyed on the spot. They therefore deleted the relevant clauses enabling authorisation to be given for eggs to be sent directly to a processing plant for thermal treatment. Following on from these amendments, they also deleted Annex III which dealt with such authorisation. They did, however, introduce new clauses allowing eggs from holdings within protection or surveillance zones established in cases of outbreaks of HPAI, or within restricted zones established in cases of outbreaks of LPAI, to be sent directly to a processing plant ;
- density of poultry is an important factor which should be taken into account when establishing protection and surveillance zones in the event of HPAI outbreaks and when taking measures to deal with LPAI outbreaks;
- prior provision should be made for emergency plans in the event of human contamination, with a view to securing coordination between Member States, avoiding panic among the general public, determining the areas to be isolated as a priority, identifying the population groups to be vaccinated as a priority and ensuring "fair and universal distribution" of anti-epidemic products;
- in the event of an influenza pandemic in the EU or in neighbouring states, the Commission should be able to take crisis measures within 24 hours, such as travel restrictions and quarantine and disinfection measures at airports receiving flights from certain regions;
- Member States should make adequate efforts to prepare for a pandemic, by creating stockpiles of antivirals and ensuring sufficient vaccine production capacity to ensure that those most at risk of exposure can be pre-emptively vaccinated against the strain causing the crisis. They should report to the Commission about their stockpiles and production capacity so that the Commission can coordinate rapid response plans for the distribution of vaccines and antivirals between Member States;
- as regards vaccination in poultry and other birds, the committee stipulated that Member States should be able to introduce emergency vaccination where disease is confirmed in a neighbouring country and not just where there is an outbreak within the EU;
- the EU should provide practical and financial assistance for the development of vaccines for poultry and other birds and should provide assistance "by all available means" to third countries which are unable to combat an outbreak of avian influenza unaided;

- a new clause stipulated that supermarkets and other firms must ensure that adverts or labels do not contain any reference as to whether or not the meat has come from vaccinated poultry, on the grounds that this information may mislead consumers;
- lastly, the committee adopted a series of amendments providing for closer cooperation with the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control.