

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

2005/0062(CNS) - 01/12/2005 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted the resolution drafted by Neil **PARISH** (EPP-ED, UK) making several amendments to the Commission's proposal. (Please see the summary of 14/11/2002.) The resolution called for tougher measures to control bird flu, improved early warning systems, the development of low-cost vaccines for poultry and a coordinated emergency plan in the event of human contamination. The main amendments were as follows:

- The Commission must provide the European Centre for disease prevention and control with information on implementation of the annual surveillance programmes. It must also provide the Centre with summary data on the submission of the reports and notifications referred to in Annex II. Parliament went on to adopt a series of amendments providing for closer cooperation with the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control.

- Member States must provide for the immediate reporting of any cases of suspected or actual infected birds whatever the nature or pathogenicity of the virus that has caused them .

- No eggs at all may leave the holding. Parliament 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, it 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.

- A new clause states that, immediately following an outbreak of HPAI in a poultry holding other than a commercial poultry holding, the competent authority may establish a protection zone and a surveillance zone, on the basis of a risk assessment and taking account of at least the criteria set out in Annex V.

- 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.

- If the outbreak of HPAI is confined in a non-commercial holding/pet bird holding, circus, zoo, pet bird shop or wildlife park, or in a fenced area where other birds are kept for scientific purposes or purposes related to the conservation of endangered species, the competent authority may, following a veterinary risk assessment, derogate to the extent necessary from the provisions concerning the establishment of the protection and surveillance zone, provided that such derogations do not jeopardise disease control.

- Parliament introduced a new Chapter Va on measures to be applied in cases of serological detection of LPAI or HPAI which cannot be confirmed through virus isolation or polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests. Appropriate measures must be taken, based on risk assessment, and the Commission must be informed. Prior provision must be made for emergency plans in the event of human contamination. Such emergency plans shall seek to: secure the necessary coordination between Member States; avoid panic

among the general public; combat any trafficking that may arise should serious risks actually emerge; determine the areas to be isolated as a priority; identify the population groups to be vaccinated as a priority, and ensure fair and universal distribution of anti-epidemic products.

-In the event of an outbreak of an influenza pandemic in the EU or in neighbouring countries, the Commission must be able to take crisis measures within 24 hours, such as quarantine and disinfection measures at airports in connection with flights from certain regions and travel restrictions.

-A new clause further states the Commission shall take steps to help ensure that sufficient antivirals and vaccines are available for those exposed to the virus in the event of an outbreak in one or more Member States.

-Member States and the Commission shall see to it that, in the event of a pandemic, the available antivirals and vaccines are effectively distributed among the Member States and countries neighbouring the EU.

-There are new provisions on preventive measures for poultry cullers, and there must be proper risk communication to farmers, workers in the poultry sector and the public;

-Member States must ensure the availability of an emergency stock of antivirals so that prophylactic protection in the case of a pandemic can be extended rapidly to all persons most at risk of exposure within the EU. They must also ensure sufficient vaccine production capacity to ensure that all persons most at risk of exposure in the event of a pandemic can be pre-emptively vaccinated against the strain in question, if necessary by increasing uptake of the seasonal human influenza vaccine.

-The Commission must draw up Community-wide pandemic preparedness plans for the distribution of vaccines and antivirals between Member States in the case of a pandemic, in accordance with the prescribed procedure. Those plans shall be made public within one year of the adoption of the Directive.

-Member States with birds of high conservation, genetic or scientific value shall have authority to acquire and use preventative vaccines with permission of the Committee and without reference to the Commission.

-A new clause is introduced for specific protective vaccination plans for zoo animals and officially registered rare breeds of poultry or other birds, in order to prevent unnecessary killing of such animals. Such vaccinated animals may be subject to specific restrictions on movement.

-Supermarkets and other undertakings shall be prohibited from advertising and/or labelling meat on the basis of the avian influenza vaccination characteristics of the animals from which the meat originates.

-Where it is in the interest of the Community, the Commission may supply vaccines to third countries, and shall number among its responsibilities the provision of assistance by all available means, where possible in cooperation with international organisations, to third countries which are unable or insufficiently able to combat an outbreak of avian influenza effectively

-An action plan shall be drawn up specifically for European institutions in the event that travel restrictions prevent international meetings, such as those of the Council and European Parliament, from taking place.

-In addition to the contingency plans, Member States must draw up effective human pandemic preparedness plans, to include rules for the production, stocking and distribution of antivirals to the persons most at risk, the coordination of efforts for the development and mass production of vaccines as well as provisions for mandatory real-time alert exercises, including cross-border cooperation in crisis management, for instance systematic virological screening of air filters from aircraft. The national preparedness plans, the results of real-time simulations and the updates of the plans following real-time

simulation must be communicated to the Commission and made public within six months following the adoption of the Directive.

-The competent authority must carry out a socio-economic impact assessment of the consequences of the contingency plan for the wider rural economy.

-A new clause is introduced on liaison with the OIE.