



Voluntary Report - public distribution

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GAIN Report #GM3013

Germany

Poultry and Products

Avian Influenza Suspected in Germany

2003

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Report Highlights:

Avian influenza is suspected on a German poultry farm in Schwalmthal, Northrhine-Westphalia close to the Dutch border. 73,000 chicken are being destroyed. If confirmed, it would be the first outbreak of avian influenza in Germany since 1979.

Includes PSD changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
Berlin [GM1], GM

Yesterday evening, May 8, 2003, a case of avian influenza was suspected in a chicken farm in Schwalmatal/Viersen in the State of Northrhine-Westphalia (close to the Dutch border). All 32,000 chicken on the farm are being destroyed and so are a total of 41,000 chickens from seven neighboring farms in a circle of 3 kilometers around the farm of the suspected outbreak. Final diagnosis of whether or not the disease is confirmed is expected within a week. If it proves to be avian influenza, it would be the first outbreak of this disease in Germany since 1979.

Ironically, the suspected outbreak occurred the very same day that the State Minister of Environment and Agriculture, Baerbel Hoehn, had announced the lifting of the precautionary prohibition of free-range chicken rearing, which had been put in place in reaction to outbreaks in the Netherlands and Belgium close to the German border.

Additional measures that were taken include:

- An observation area of 10 km around the farm of outbreak has been established.
- Within this zone the marketing of eggs has been suspended.
- In the whole State of Northrhine-Westphalia live chicken or hatching eggs may not be transported until May 14.
- The prohibition of free-range rearing in regions bordering to the Netherlands or Belgium was extended for an undetermined time.
- The application of chicken manure is prohibited.
- Chicken shows and flights of carrier pigeons are prohibited

As reaction to the outbreaks in the Netherlands and Belgium, the German Federal Ministry of Consumer Protection, Food, and Agriculture established the following national precautionary measures on April 10, 2003:

- Everyone (including backyard holders) who keeps any kind of poultry (including turkey, duck, geese, pheasants, pigeons, partridges, and quails) has to give the relevant authority their name, address, average number of animals kept, use and location of the birds.
- Losses in a flock of more than 2 percent within 24 hours, unusual changes in egg production or weight gain have to be notified and at the same time a test on influenza A subtypes H5 and H7 has to be conducted.
- Chicken shows, chicken markets etc. are prohibited.
- Poultry, except for one-day-chicken, as well as hatching eggs may only be transported if a veterinary inspection is conducted within 24 hours before transport and no sign of avian influenza is detected. The inspection has to be documented by the veterinarian.
- Any intended transport has to be notified with at minimum one working day advance notice.
- Any vehicle used for the transport of poultry has to be disinfected directly before and after every transport.
- Everyone who keeps poultry has to keep a register of all purchases and sales of poultry with dates of delivery and names and addresses of previous or future owner and transport company, as well as of every person entering the farm, who does not work there, as well as date of entry.

Avian influenza is a viral disease that can affect all kinds of poultry. Infections of chicken and

turkey are the most severe and are fatal within only a few days. Infections of humans are extremely rare and only occur through very close contact with infected birds. Infection through meat is not possible.

In 2001 Germany produced 13,692 million eggs, and 974,400 MT of poultry meat.