



USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agriculture Information Network

Template Version 2.09

Voluntary Report - public distribution

Date: 9/12/2005

GAIN Report Number: GM5035

Germany

Poultry and Products

AI-Threat: German Poultry Must Stay Inside - But Only in Certain Regions

2005

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Report Highlights:

In reaction to the possible threat of Avian Influenza (AI) infection through migratory birds, the states of Lower Saxony and Northrhine-Westphalia have announced a requirement for all poultry to be kept in enclosed housing between September 15, and November 30, 2005, for endangered parts of their territory.

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

High pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) outbreaks in several Russian provinces and Kazakhstan in the past months have resulted in fears that migratory birds might bring the disease to other parts of the world including Germany, and spurred the discussion about appropriate responses.

The states of Lower-Saxony (LS) and Northrhine-Westphalia (NRW) have announced a requirement for poultry (chicken, guinea fowls, turkey, ducks, and geese) in especially endangered regions to stay in enclosed housing between September 15, and November 30, 2005. Also all poultry holdings have to be checked routinely for the AI virus by a veterinarian once a month.

This is a reaction to the failure of all German states to agree on such a requirement for all of Germany. LS feels it is more at risk than some of the other states as many of migratory bird routes lead over LS territory and about 72 million animals or 60 percent of all German poultry is kept in LS. For legal reasons LS is not allowed to ban holding poultry outdoors for all of its territory, so this rule only applies in certain areas. These areas, that cover more than half of LS territory, were determined by taking into account the known migratory bird routes, bird resting places, waterways and poultry density in those areas. A map showing (in red color) the regions that require enclosed housing can be accessed under the following link: http://cdl.niedersachsen.de/blob/images/C13091093_L20.pdf

The state of Northrhine-Westphalia is less affected by bird migratory routes, consequently the areas covered by the ban are smaller, and include Petershagen and the lower Niederrhein only.

In contrast to the original proposal by the German Federal Ministry of Consumer Protection, Food, and Agriculture (BMVEL), both, the LS as well as the NRW regulation apply to all poultry irrespective of the holding size. A failure to comply will result in 25,000 Euro (U.S. \$ 31,250) fine.

Background:

The German Federal Ministry of Consumer Protection, Food, and Agriculture (BMVEL) had proposed an emergency regulation to prevent the spread of avian influenza in Germany on August 19, 2005. This regulation among other things required poultry to be placed in enclosed housing for the next three months for all holdings of 100 or more birds. The German Laender, which are responsible for enforcing animal health regulations in Germany, had the opportunity to comment on the proposed regulation until August 25.

On August 29, 2005, BMVEL and the majority of the German Laender concluded a general ban on keeping poultry outdoors to be a disproportionate measure at this time. Instead, surveillance of wild birds as well as of poultry not in enclosed housing should be increased. This swing in opinion was clearly influenced by the August 25 meeting of the EU commission with member state veterinary experts, in which the majority considered a general ban on keeping poultry outdoors to be a disproportionate measure at this time.

On September 3, 2005, BMVEL published a regulation that requires hunters to send samples of all shot ducks and geese to the relevant authority for virological examination and to report any increased appearance of sick or dead birds to the relevant authority. Establishments that breed poultry and those that keep more than 100 birds not exclusively in enclosed housing have to examine their flocks for AI subtype H5 and H7 between October 15 and December 15, 2005.

A regulation requiring all poultry throughout Germany to stay in enclosed housing has been prepared and could be imposed immediately, if the surveillance shows an increased risk for infection with HPAI.