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Report Number: AU2021-0004

Report Name: Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Detected in a Small Farm in Lower Austria

Country: Austria

Post: Vienna

Report Category: Agricultural Situation, Agriculture in the News, Pest/Disease Occurrences

Prepared By: Roswitha Krautgartner

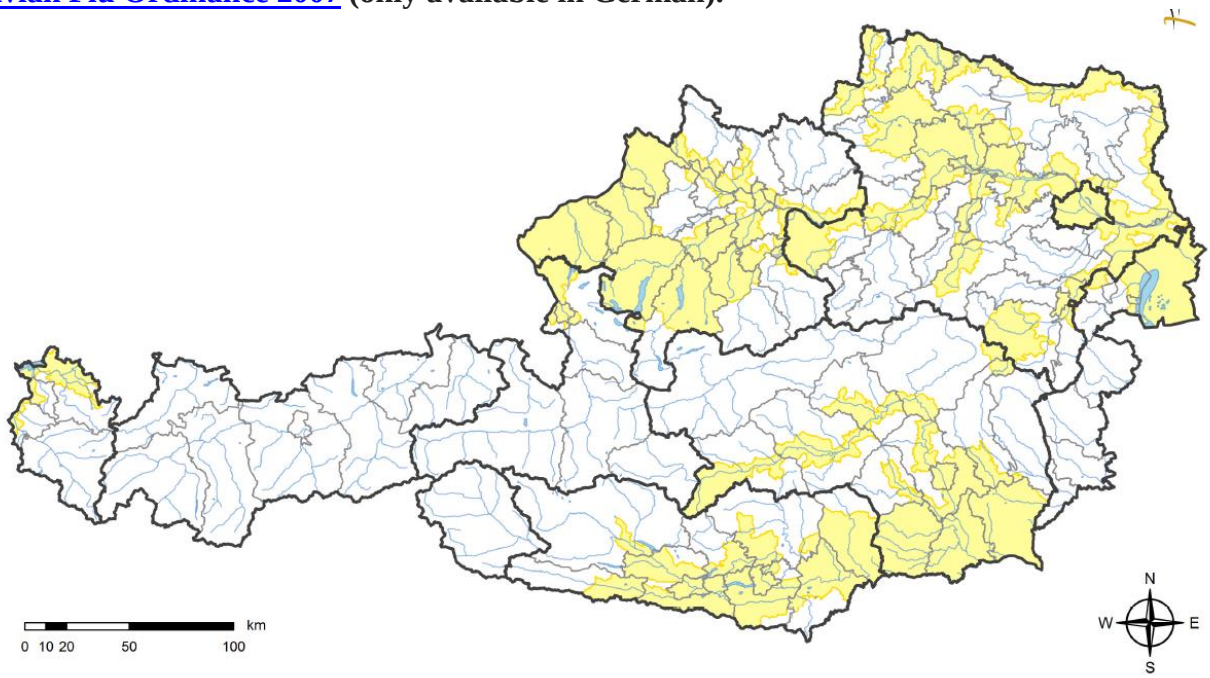
Approved By: Kirsten Luxbacher

Report Highlights:

On November 25, the Austrian Agency for Health and Food Safety confirmed the first on-farm case of avian influenza this fall. The highly pathogenic H5N1 type was found on a small chicken farm in the province Lower Austria. The chickens from the affected flock either died or were culled under official supervision and the farm has been closed. As a result of this outbreak, the Ministry of Health, in agreement with the Ministry of Agriculture and the federal states, issued an ordinance with the requirement to keep poultry inside within the defined risk areas.

On November 25, the Austrian Agency for Health and Food Safety (AGES) confirmed the first on-farm case of avian influenza (avian flu) since spring 2021 on a small backyard chicken farm (about 20 chickens) in Fischamend, Lower Austria. Avian flu has been spreading in Europe since mid-October and its arrival in Austria was expected. The chickens from the affected flock either died or were culled under official supervision. The chicken operation has been closed. As a result of this outbreak, on November 25, the Ministry of Health, in agreement with the Ministry of Agriculture and the federal states, issued an ordinance that made it mandatory to keep poultry inside a stable for farms within defined risk areas with more than 350 birds. The proven H5N1 type is highly pathogenic and is spread in Europe through wild bird migration.

Risk areas as defined in the third amendment (issued on November 25, 2021) of the Austrian Avian Flu Ordinance 2007 (only available in German).



Source: AGES

Since the outbreak took place on a small backyard farm whose production was only intended for self-supply, there is currently no impact on Austrian poultry trade. However, the Austrian authorities are monitoring the situation very closely. In the case of an outbreak in a commercial poultry farm the veterinary authorities will then establish protection and surveillance zones and apply for regionalization of the Austrian territory.

Per Austrian veterinary regulations, all poultry farms have to comply with biosecurity measures such as feeding in covered areas. Direct and indirect contact between poultry and wild birds should be avoided at all costs. If there are unclear health problems in poultry farms, a veterinary examination must be carried out. It is mandatory to notify the local veterinary authority of wild water birds and birds of prey that are found dead in order to detect cases in wild birds early.

Before the November 2021 outbreak, the last case of avian flu was detected in spring 2021, and it was also found on a small farm. Before 2021, avian flu had not been detected on a farm in Austria since 2016/17 when the H5N8 virus was detected on two farms. Common factors in these two outbreaks (November 10, 2016 and January 17, 2017) which occurred in Vorarlberg and Burgenland include that they were located in the immediate vicinity of a lake and positive wild bird findings. During this same period, H5N8 was also detected in wild birds in the lake regions in the federal states of Salzburg and Upper Austria, but there were no cases detected in agricultural holdings.

Monitoring Program and Results of the surveillance in Austria

The Austrian avian influenza monitoring program consists of active (domestic poultry) and passive (wild birds) components. In 2020, a total of 3,655 blood samples taken from domestic poultry were tested for the avian influenza virus. All samples were negative. In the same year, under the passive surveillance program, 187 samples were taken from wild birds that had been found dead. Through this testing, non-pathogenic avian influenza was found in four of the sampled dead wild birds.

Attachments:

No Attachments.