

Voluntary Report – Voluntary - Public Distribution

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Report Name: Increasing Avian Flu Detections in Wild Birds - Obligatory Housing for Poultry in Several Austrian Regions

Country: Austria

Post: Vienna

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

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Report Highlights:

Due to increased detections of the highly pathogenic avian influenza (AI) virus H5N1 in wild birds, the Austrian authorities declared certain areas of Austria at greatly increased risk of AI. Additional biosecurity measures are applied in these areas until further notice to protect domestic poultry from infection. Poultry must be kept permanently in barns or at least in covered housing facilities. Currently, there has not been a trade impact for Austria.

Summary:

Due to increased detections of highly pathogenic avian influenza (AI) virus H5N1 in wild birds, Austrian authorities declared certain areas of the federal states Burgenland, Carinthia, Lower Austria, and Upper Austria as being at greatly increased risk of AI.

Additional biosecurity measures are applied in these areas until further notice to protect domestic poultry from infection. Poultry must be kept permanently in stables or at least in covered housing facilities. Poultry farmers have to pay particular attention to compliance with biosecurity measures, most importantly preventing direct and indirect contact between poultry and wild birds. If poultry shows health problems, they have to be tested for H5N1.

Currently, no commercial are affected, but one small hobby farm is affected. The cases of H5N1 in wild birds have mainly been found in cranes and grey geese. Since the beginning of this year, there have been numerous outbreaks of AI in wild birds in all Austrian federal states. At the beginning of 2023, some Austrian commercial and hobby poultry farms were affected by H5N1.

Current Austrian AI Situation:

Since the end of October, the highly pathogenic avian influenza virus H5N1 (avian influenza, bird flu, AI) has been detected in several regions of Austria in wild birds, especially cranes and grey geese, and in poultry of one small hobby farm. Austrian official experts assume that further already infected but still living wild birds occur in these regions.

Due to this increased detections of wild birds, certain areas in Burgenland, Carinthia, Lower and Upper Austria have been declared areas with a greatly increased risk of avian influenza, where additional biosecurity measures apply until further notice to protect domestic poultry from possible infection. These measures include:

- From 50 birds onwards, poultry must be kept permanently in barns or at least in covered housing facilities (compulsory barns).
- Poultry farmers who keep fewer than 50 animals are exempt from this barn requirement, provided they ensure that ducks and geese are separated from other poultry and their poultry is protected from contact with wild birds.

The rest of Austria remains an area with an increased risk of avian influenza, where less strict biosecurity measures apply. Poultry farmers should pay particular attention to compliance with the following measures:

- Avoid direct and indirect contact between poultry and wild birds.
- If animals have health problems on poultry farms, a veterinary examination and AI testing have to be carried out.
- For early detection and prevention of further spread, all wild waterfowl and birds of prey found dead must be reported to the local responsible official veterinarian. Such animals should not be

touched and left where they were found. The rescue and investigations are arranged by the authorities.

The virus is now constantly present in the European Union (EU) even during the summer months. For this reason, all poultry farms in Austria have to comply with a minimum level of biosecurity measures all year round, including:

- The poultry must be protected as best as possible from contact with wild birds, the animals may only be fed and watered under cover, and no surface water may be used for drinking.

During the cold season, increased outbreaks of avian influenza can be expected as migrating birds are regarded as a major source of infection.

Figure 1: Austrian avian influenza outbreaks since October 1, 2023, and areas with increased and greatly increased risk areas.

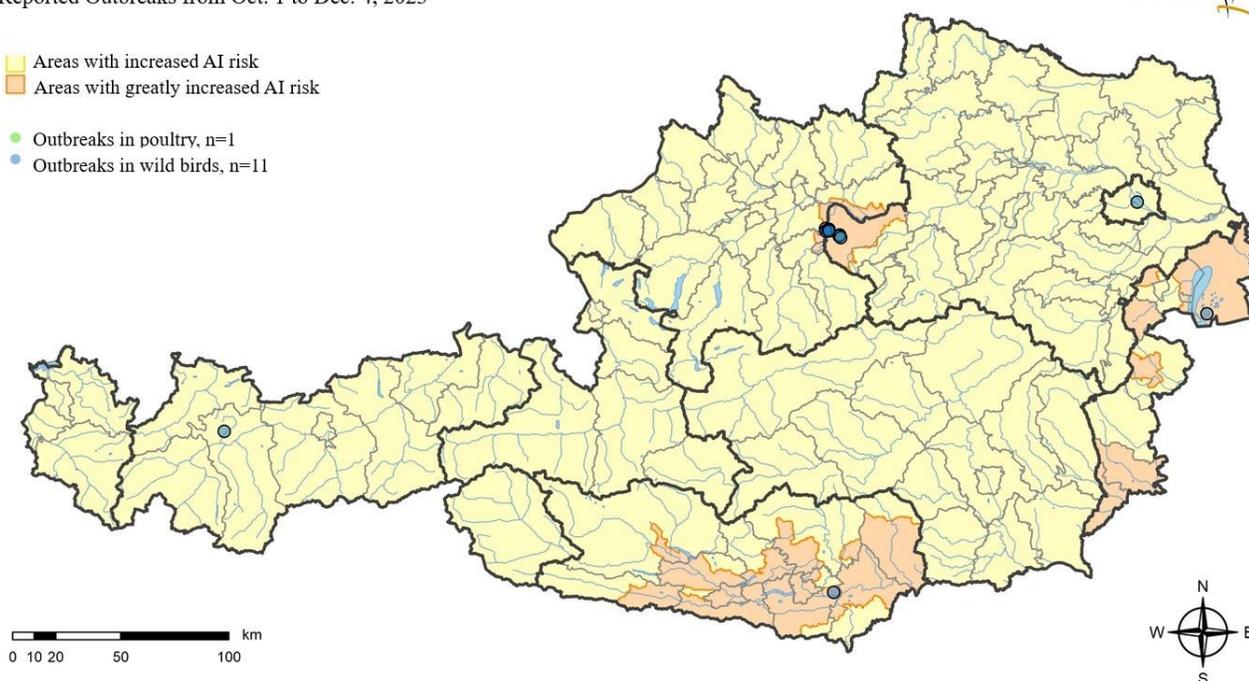
Avian Influenza - Risk Areas and Outbreaks

Reported Outbreaks from Oct. 1 to Dec. 4, 2023



- Areas with increased AI risk
- Areas with greatly increased AI risk

- Outbreaks in poultry, n=1
- Outbreaks in wild birds, n=11



Source: Agency for Health and Food Safety ([AGES](#))

The risk of avian influenza is continually evaluated by the Austrian Agency for Health and Food Safety (AGES). The evaluation of the AI situation is not only based on the occurrence of the pathogen in Austria but also on the epidemic situation in neighboring countries, climatic conditions, and known migratory bird routes. Based on this data, areas may be expanded with a greatly increased risk of avian influenza in the coming weeks. As soon as the situation allows, the special measures will be withdrawn.

The exact scope and wording of the measures can be found in the Avian Influenza Ordinance 2007 and, in summary, in the “Consumer Health Communication Platform” ([KVG](#)).

Protection and surveillance zones

In the event of a positive detection of AI in a commercial poultry farm in Austria, protection and monitoring zones must be set up, which will remain in place for at least 21 or 30 days from the preliminary cleaning and disinfection of the outbreak farm.

The latest outbreak of AI on an Austrian commercial poultry farm occurred at the beginning of 2023. Roughly 2,600 chickens from the affected pullet rearing farm had to be culled.

Measures in protection and surveillance zones in the event of an outbreak on a commercial poultry farm:

- All people entering poultry houses must comply with appropriate biosecurity measures (e.g.: disinfection at entrances and exits to the houses). Visits must be documented.
- All vehicles entering or leaving the company must undergo appropriate disinfection measures.
- If there is an increased mortality of poultry on the farm, this must be reported immediately to the responsible district administrative authority.
- The poultry kept must be isolated (e.g. in barns) in such a way that it is protected from contact with wild birds. This applies regardless of the size of the flock, which means that the obligation to keep the birds inside also applies to small businesses with fewer than 50 animals.
- The poultry may only be brought into or removed from a holding with the approval of the district administrative authority.
- Animal shows, competitions or fairs involving poultry are prohibited in these zones.

Attachments:

No Attachments.