

HOW TO MANAGE AN OUTBREAK OF AVIAN FLU IN A REGION

Harm Kiezebrink

Herman Kiezebrink Instituut, Kerkstraat 2, 9160 Lokeren Belgium kiezebrink.belgie@pandora.be

Introduction

Outbreaks of highly pathogenic Avian Influenza can be extremely difficult to control, even under favourable conditions. To be successful in controlling outbreaks of animal diseases, it is necessary to be prepared, to take immediate action and to limit the financial consequences. This means a coordinated approach and contingency planning.

Never the first time

Avian Influenza is not likely to disappear.* In waterfowl, faecal contamination of water supplies is considered to be a very efficient way of transmitting the virus.

Although no evidence to date has conclusively linked the current outbreaks to wild migratory birds; several outbreaks have been linked to contact between free-ranging flocks and wild birds, i.e. the shared use of water sources. Infected poultry present a major risk of further spreading of the virus, both to other susceptible poultry and to other animal species, including humans. So culling must be completed as safely, quickly and humanely as possible. Avian Influenza itself will not disappear, so we have to be prepared for its sudden appearance in domestic poultry. When this happens the only option is to fight Avian Influenza with all means, and to minimise the risk of avoidable spreading to other animals. If Avian Influenza is not dealt with correctly and efficiently, one of the worst consequences can be infection of human beings. Specialised knowledge, based upon recent experience, is needed to be successful in fighting Avian Influenza, and experts should be consulted whenever possible.

Bio-security

- *Contingency Planning*, based on standard international procedures and protocols for eradicating measures
- *Eradication procedures*, based upon local circumstances, different types of housing and animal related factors such as the type of animal, age etc.
- *Development of culling techniques and equipment* to carry out eradication procedures with respect to animal welfare
- *Training and management development* for personnel and staff responsible for contingency planning, eradication procedures and culling
- *World wide consultancy* on the above mentioned issues, in close cooperation with United Nations organisations, such as the WHO and FAO
- *Reducing financial risks* for farmers, farmers organisations and governments

Based upon the understanding of these recent outbreaks, the European Community should develop a contingency database with vital information about critical factors that are of major influence on the choice of the most appropriate culling technique under certain conditions. These techniques were already tested by

independent researchers at Wageningen University in The Netherlands

Pilot light concept

These concepts contain 'pre-outbreak planning' that includes:

- Pre-consulting and auditing of farms
- Contingency planning in close cooperation with farmers, farmers organisations, local and regional governments and disease control organisations
- Building a local operation to carry out emergency culling within 24 hours of confirmation of an outbreak of an animal disease
- Creating a local service network to assist during an outbreak
- Setting up local training programmes for management and staff
- A yearly training course to test and update all practices

Avian Influenza Insurance

Poultry production contributes greatly to the economies and food supplies of affected countries. Outbreaks of animal disease can result in immense financial consequences. The direct costs of the latest outbreak in The Netherlands are estimated to be one billion Euro. The agricultural sector therefore faces the challenge of minimising losses.

We should develop a Culling Database based upon experience. This database contains all knowledge and expertise on culling, taking into account the local circumstances, the amount of poultry, the type and age of the animals, etc. To calculate the risks one carries out an audit at the premises of all participating farmers (at least 80% have to participate to be successful.) This results in the issue of a certificate of clearance, which will enable culling to take place within 24 hours in the event of an outbreak of a contagious animal disease, and an estimate of the costs involved.

Some recent outbreaks of H P avian flu

- 2002; Hong Kong (China), H5N1
- 2002; Chile, H7N3
- 2003; Netherlands, H7N7
- 2003; Belgium, H7N7
- 2003-2004; South East Asia Region H5N1