

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002891/24
to the Commission
Moritz Körner (Renew)
(12 December 2024)**

Subject: Virus

With regard to the global outbreak of A(H5N1), which has continued for a number of years now, in March and April 2024 the virus was recorded for the first time also in dairy herds in various US states. In this context, individual cases of H5N1 infection have also been detected in humans displaying signs of mild illness (conjunctivitis, respiratory symptoms) who have had close professional contact with dairy cows suspected to be infected.

1. How does the Commission assess the risk posed by the virus to people in the EU?
2. How does the Commission expect the EU's livestock numbers to be affected as a result of both the virus and possible preventive measures?
3. What specific consequences could the virus have for the EU budget?

Submitted: 12.12.2024

**Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission
(28 February 2025)**

The Commission is closely following the threat represented by the circulation of avian influenza H5N1 in mammals, including in cattle, with preparedness and readiness actions.

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) assesses risks posed by communicable diseases to the EU/European Economic Area (EEA). Given the current absence of circulation of H5N1 in cattle in the EU and other considerations, ECDC currently assesses the risk as low for the general population and low to moderate for persons occupationally exposed to infected animals ⁽¹⁾.

ECDC is closely monitoring the situation and would update its risk assessment, should a change in the epidemiology or the disease occur globally and/or in the EU/EEA.

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), ECDC and the EU Reference Laboratory for avian influenza (EURL) are closely monitoring the situation in the EU and worldwide, including in the United States (US), and scientific reports ⁽²⁾ are published regularly.

The H5N1 clade 2.3.4.4b, genotype B3.13 virus affecting dairy cows in the US has not been reported elsewhere outside the US.

However, the Commission asked EFSA and the EURL ⁽³⁾ for a particular assessment of the situation in the US with a view of exploring possible action in animals, notably in dairy cows, if the virus is introduced in the EU.

The specific consequences on the EU budget in case the H5N1, clade 2.3.4.4b, genotype B3.13 emerges in dairy cows in the EU cannot be estimated as it would depend on many variables.

However, certain actions in the Member States might be eligible for co-funding in accordance with the relevant EU legislation ⁽⁴⁾. Also, the EU4Health Programme ⁽⁵⁾ is supporting actions to improve surveillance in Europe ⁽⁶⁾ and can also support actions during a possible crisis.

⁽¹⁾ <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/infectious-disease-topics/z-disease-list/avian-influenza/threats-and-outbreaks/risk-assessment-h5#:~:text=The%20risk%20for%20occupationally%20or,considered%20to%20be%20very%20low>

⁽²⁾ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/topics/topic/avian-influenza#published-on-this-topic>

⁽³⁾ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2024-00712>

⁽⁴⁾ Regulation (EU) 2021/690 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing a programme for the internal market, competitiveness of enterprises, including small and medium-sized enterprises, the area of plants, animals, food and feed, and European statistics (Single Market Programme) and repealing Regulations (EU) No 99/2013, (EU) No 1287/2013, (EU) No 254/2014 and (EU) No 652/2014 (OJ L 153, 3.5.2021, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/690/oj>).

⁽⁵⁾ https://health.ec.europa.eu/funding/eu4health-programme-2021-2027-vision-healthier-european-union_en

⁽⁶⁾ <https://united4surveillance.eu/>