

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002113/25  
to the Commission  
Gerben-Jan Gerbrandy (Renew)  
(27 May 2025)**

*Subject:* H5N1 bird flu: high-risk geographical areas

The withdrawal of the United States from the World Health Organisation raises serious concerns about our ability to monitor and prevent zoonotic disease outbreaks. We are losing critical data and research from our American partners at a time when the risk of zoonotic spillovers is increasing globally.

Recent reports on the H5N1 bird flu strain have documented its cross-species transmission to pigs and cattle, subsequently resulting in 70 human cases and 1 death in the United States since 2024. Scientists warn that these risks are particularly severe in countries with high livestock densities. In such environments, large numbers of animals are kept in confined spaces with limited genetic diversity and compromised immune systems, creating ideal conditions for viral pathogenesis and transmission.

1. What measures has the Commission taken to compensate for the loss of American data?
2. Has the Commission identified and mapped high-risk geographical areas in Europe for zoonotic disease outbreaks, including regions with high livestock densities?
3. If so, what specific prevention and mitigation plans have been developed for those identified high-risk areas to prevent zoonotic spillovers?

Submitted: 27.5.2025

**Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission  
(22 August 2025)**

The Commission closely follows the highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) situation in the EU and worldwide. The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the EU Reference Laboratory for HPAI regularly publish scientific reports on the HPAI situation in and outside the EU. There is no lack of data from the United States (US) on HPAI in animals.

The US notifies HPAI outbreaks in animals in the World Animal Health Information System (WAHIS) of the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) in accordance with the international standards, and the US Department of Agriculture publishes data on detections of HPAI, subtype H5N1 in animals <sup>(1)</sup>.

EU legislation on Union surveillance programmes for avian influenza in animals <sup>(2)</sup> requires Member States to define geographical areas or establishments with a heightened risk for HPAI introduction and spread.

Risk factors include areas through which migratory birds are travelling or where are resting, proximity of establishments to wet areas, areas with high density of poultry, and the intensity of movements of vehicles and persons within and from establishments.

Considering its zoonotic risk, the EU legislation regarding surveillance programmes was amended <sup>(3)</sup> in 2023 to also require surveillance in target mammal species in areas and periods of higher risk.

Biosecurity, such as confining poultry in high-risk areas during higher risk periods to protect them from contact with infected wild birds, is the cornerstone of prevention measures.

Vaccination is possible under specific rules and may be used to complement biosecurity. France has successfully used vaccination of ducks to prevent the spread of HPAI in areas with specific risks.

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<sup>(1)</sup> <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/h5n1-hpai#detections-hpai>.

<sup>(2)</sup> Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/689 of 17 December 2019 supplementing Regulation (EU) 2016/429 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards rules for surveillance, eradication programmes, and disease-free status for certain listed and emerging diseases (OJ L 174, 3.6.2020, p. 211-340, [http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg\\_del/2020/689/oj](http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg_del/2020/689/oj)).

<sup>(3)</sup> Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/1798 of 10 July 2023 amending Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/689 supplementing Regulation (EU) 2016/429 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards rules for surveillance, eradication programmes, and disease-free status for certain listed and emerging diseases (OJ L 233, 21.9.2023, p. 24-26, [http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg\\_del/2023/1798/oj](http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg_del/2023/1798/oj)).