

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000750/26
to the Commission
Asger Christensen (Renew)
(23 February 2026)**

Subject: Surveillance zones and final cleaning and disinfection requirements for highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI)

In its revision of Article 55 of Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/687, the Commission proposes that the lifting of restrictions in surveillance zones should be directly linked to the completion and approval of final cleaning and disinfection (C&D).

The industry argues that, in practice, this could make zoning periods significantly longer. National calculations show that an extension from 30 to 60 days could double the direct sector-specific costs — excluding export losses — without compensation.

At the same time, several Member States, including France, are experiencing egg supply problems owing to bird flu outbreaks.

1. What specific epidemiological and scientific evidence is there to show that the lifting of zoning requirements before final C&D is complete poses a significant and documented risk of infection, and are there any documented cases of reinfection under the current arrangements?
2. How does the Commission's reference to the World Organisation for Animal Health standards fit in with the fact that, in practice, the Member States have not applied an automatic 60-day approach, and what does the Commission define as 'exceptional situations'?
3. Will the competent authorities of the Member States continue to have a genuine, documented, risk-based assessment when it comes to the lifting of zoning requirements, or does the review in practice entail an automatic and mandatory extension of the restrictions?

Submitted: 23.2.2026

**Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission
(21 April 2026)**

The size and minimum duration of restricted zones established in accordance with Union law ⁽¹⁾ for outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) are based on scientific evidence published by the European Food Safety Authority ⁽²⁾.

The international standards of the Terrestrial Code ⁽³⁾ of the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) require cleaning and disinfection as condition for the recovery of free status when stamping out policy as defined in Chapter 4.2. of that Code is implemented.

The procedures of cleaning and disinfection to be implemented for the eradication of outbreaks of category A disease, including HPAI, are described in EU rules and are composed of preliminary and final cleaning and disinfection.

Completion of final cleaning and disinfection is, among other conditions, required by Article 68(1) of Regulation (EU) 2016/429 ⁽⁴⁾ (Animal Health Law) before lifting the disease control measures in restricted zones.

Therefore, Union law is aligned with the international standards ensuring guarantees for third countries accepting the regionalisation by the Union and the continuation of the trade from non-affected areas of the EU.

In accordance with applicable Union law, the lifting of a restricted zone established for outbreaks of category A disease is not automatic.

Such a zone can only be lifted after a minimum period (30 days in case of HPAI) only if all required measures, including enhanced surveillance in establishments located in the protection and surveillance zones, have been completed within that period. This approach remains unchanged by the revised Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/687 ⁽⁵⁾.

⁽¹⁾ Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/687 of 17 December 2019 supplementing Regulation (EU) 2016/429 of the European Parliament and the Council, as regards rules for the prevention and control of certain listed diseases (OJ L 174, 3.6.2020, pp. 64, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg_del/2020/687/oj).

⁽²⁾ <https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.2903/j.efsa.2021.6372>.

⁽³⁾ <https://www.woah.org/en/what-we-do/standards/codes-and-manuals/>.

⁽⁴⁾ Regulation (EU) 2016/429 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 March 2016 on transmissible animal diseases and amending and repealing certain acts in the area of animal health ('Animal Health Law') (OJ L 84, 31.3.2016, pp. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2016/429/oj>).

⁽⁵⁾ http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg_del/2020/687/oj.