

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000860/26
to the Commission
Sergio Berlato (ECR)
(2 March 2026)**

Subject: Vaccination against avian influenza — risks and benefits

In November 2025, EFSA stated that it had detected 1 443 cases of avian influenza in wild birds in the previous three months, chiefly waterfowl, from 26 EU countries, the highest number since 2016 ⁽¹⁾. In November 2025, the EMA authorised the use of ⁽²⁾: five veterinary vaccines against the highly pathogenic avian influenza virus, subtype H5. seven influenza vaccines for human use in preparation for a pandemic, without a pandemic having been declared, in addition to four antivirals. The specifications for authorisations suggest that the medicines are still in an experimental phase: ‘medicine authorised in exceptional circumstances’, further studies ‘to obtain data on efficacy’ and ‘the benefits of the vaccine outweigh its risks’.

Can the Commission therefore say:

1. What measures it intends to take to ensure full transparency and access to information on the efficacy of authorised vaccines, including the criteria for their selection, data on their efficacy and post-vaccination surveillance protocols (DIVA strategy), also assessing the risk to humans and animals and the consequent potential damage to food safety?
2. what structural prevention measures, such as checking farm density and production planning, will accompany vaccination in order to reduce the risk of new outbreaks?
3. whether it has carried out or intends to carry out assessments of the impact of vaccination on exports to third countries and on the competitiveness of the supply chain?

Submitted: 2.3.2026

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

The authorisations referred to by the Honourable Member aim to address exceptional circumstances related to animal or public health. These are only granted where the benefit of their immediate availability outweighs the risks linked to the absence of certain documentation.

These authorisations are only valid for one year and subject to re-examination to confirm that i) the exceptional circumstances remain, and ii) the benefit-risk balance remains positive ⁽¹⁾.

The outcome of their assessment as regards their quality, efficacy, risks to humans, animals and food safety, is reflected in the assessment reports prepared by the European Medicines Agency. These reports are publicly available in the EU Product Database ⁽²⁾, ensuring full transparency.

In accordance with the assessment ⁽³⁾ of the European Food Safety Authority, poultry holding density should be considered a major contributing factor for large highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) epidemics. Member States should consider this risk factor when designing their prevention strategy against HPAI.

Vaccination may be used as a complementary tool that, added to biosecurity and other measures, can help prevention against infection and spread of HPAI in poultry.

Currently, France is the only Member State implementing preventive vaccination against HPAI in poultry and only a few trading partners continue applying trade restrictions, limited to certain products of vaccinated poultry.

¹ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/it/news/avian-influenza-europe-enhanced-surveillance-and-strict-biosecurity-needed-detections-surge>.

² <https://www.ema.europa.eu/en/human-regulatory-overview/public-health-threats/avian-influenza-bird-flu>.

⁽¹⁾ Articles 25 to 27 of Regulation (EU) 2019/6 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2018 on veterinary medicinal products.

⁽²⁾ <https://medicines.health.europa.eu/veterinary/select-language?destination=/node/210934>.

⁽³⁾ <https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.2903/j.efsa.2017.4991>.