

## Africa Union

### HPAI H5N8 - Notification

<b>Date/Time:</b>	<b>24 November 2020</b>
<b>Incident/Event title/Name</b>	<b>Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) H5N8</b>
<b>Notification*</b>	<input checked="" type="radio"/> <b>Alert</b> <input type="radio"/> Warning <input type="radio"/> Activation <input type="radio"/> Execution

\*Circle one as appropriate

<b>From AUC Technical Offices</b>	AU-IBAR, AU-PANVAC and Africa-CDC
<b>To</b>	AU Member States

#### 1. Situation

**Summary:** As of 22 November 2020, a highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5N8 outbreak in wild birds and poultry has been reported in 12 countries, mainly in western Europe. The virus has been carried across from Southern Russia to Kazakhstan, and now Eastern Europe through migratory birds heading back to their winter feeding grounds primarily in Africa. As these are migratory birds, and even poultry flocks or products, coming into Africa from the affected regions could be carrying the virus, this poses a threat to poultry flock health, farmer livelihoods, and food security on the continent. And while this particular virus has not caused illness in humans to date, the likelihood of a spill-over event that could impact human health should not be ignored.

**Background:** The HPAI H5N8 virus of concern is of the H5 2.3.4.4.b. clade that has been circulating across Eurasia and into Africa since 2016. The first report regarding this current outbreak came from southern Russian in late July. To date, 12 countries have been impacted: Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Kazakhstan, Netherlands, Russia, Sweden, and the UK.<sup>1,2</sup> The species most commonly affected have been wild and domestic fowl (e.g. domestic ducks, geese, chickens, swans).

<sup>1</sup> Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale delle Venezie. [Avian influenza in Europe: update](#)

<sup>2</sup> OIE. [Update on avian influenza in animals \(types H5 and H7\)](#)

While the original virus has reassorted with other wild bird influenza viruses to form new strains of H5N5 and H5N1 HPAI virus, no evidence of spillover of this clade into human populations has been detected. However, direct transmission from an infected bird or through another infected animal reservoir, while rare, is possible<sup>3</sup>.

According to World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) [reports](#), several African countries have reported previous HPAI H5 or H7 outbreaks over the past 5 years. Specifically, all five AU regions and at least 15 AU Member States have been impacted (Table 1). Nigeria and South Africa are the only two countries reporting ongoing H5 outbreaks this year.

**Table 1.** OIE reports of H5 and H7 HPAI outbreaks by country in Africa, 2015-2020

Region	Country	HPAI virus(es)	Most recent report (year)
Central	Cameroon	H5N1; H5N8	2017; 2017
Eastern	Uganda	H5N8	2017
Northern	Algeria	H7N1	2017
	Egypt	H5N2; H5N8	2019; 2017
	Libya	H5N1	2015
	Tunisia	H5N8	2017
Southern	Namibia	H5N8	2019
	South Africa	H5N8	2020
	Zimbabwe	H5N8	2017
Western	Burkina Faso	H5N1	2016
	Côte d'Ivoire	H5N1	2018
	Ghana	H5; H5N1	2018; 2016
	Niger	H5N1; H5N8	2017; 2017
	Nigeria	H5N8; H5N6; H5N1	2020; 2020; 2020
	Togo	H5N1	2019

**Current concerns include:**

- Infected migratory birds, poultry or poultry products coming from impacted countries could transmit the virus to domestic flocks in Africa;
- Domestic bird health;
- Poultry farmer livelihoods;
- Food security;
- Trade and national economies;
- Human health; and
- All of the above in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which could exacerbate the issues surrounding livelihoods, economies, food security, and human health.

<sup>3</sup> WHO. [Cumulative number of confirmed human cases of avian influenza A\(H5N1\) reported to WHO](#)

## 2. Recommendations

This notification is being sent out jointly by the three African Union Commission (AUC) Technical Offices (Africa CDC, AU-IBAR, and AU-PANVAC) to increase Member State awareness of the current situation of the highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5N8 outbreak in the world.

Given the current situation, we recommend that Member States take a “One Health approach” with close collaboration between the veterinary services and public health to take the following steps to prepare for potential H5N8 outbreaks:

### ***In general:***

- Review/update and activate the existing Integrated National Action Plan (INAP) to fight against Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza infection and contingency plan;
- Joint risk based surveillance between animal, human and wildlife interface using One Health Approach;
- Ensure mechanisms are in place for timely reporting by the National Veterinary Services to AU-IBAR ([DiseaseReports@au-ibar.org](mailto:DiseaseReports@au-ibar.org)) and OIE, and subsequently to Africa CDC ([AfricaCDCEBS@africa-union.org](mailto:AfricaCDCEBS@africa-union.org)) and WHO;
- Raise awareness among all stakeholders (e.g. poultry farmers/keepers, marketers, hunters, etc.) to:
  - Monitor for wild bird/poultry die-offs and provide national/local reporting mechanisms (e.g. hotlines),
  - Limit direct/indirect contact between domestic poultry and wild birds,
  - Ensure biosecurity measures in place to limit spread; and
- Consult Africa CDC’s One Health resources: [Framework for One Health Practice in National Public Health Institutes](#)

### ***For Chief Veterinary Officers (CVOs):***

- Conduct targeted surveillance on wild birds in wetlands hosting migratory birds;
- Conduct risk analysis and risk mapping as a component of early warning system in risk based surveillance strategy;
- Develop a mechanism for early warning on respiratory disease event-based on domestic poultry and mortality of wild bird;
- Collect samples on respiratory disease event-based in poultry;
- Ensure/reinforce veterinary laboratories capacities in term of diagnostic to confirm any outbreak of HPAI H5N8; and
- Develop a national control plan for the HPAI H5N8.

**For NPHIs and Ministries of Health:**

- Enhance existing human and animal surveillance efforts
  - ILI/SARI surveillance for humans to identify any spill-over
  - Event-based surveillance for clusters of respiratory disease among people in the community and wild bird/domestic poultry die-offs
- Ensure HPAI H5N8 diagnostics and data/sample sharing agreements are in place in laboratories

**AU-IBAR and AU-PANVAC** will coordinate interventions to support the National Veterinary Services with CVOS and diagnostic laboratories.

**Africa CDC** will continue our routine event-based surveillance activities to monitor for bird die-offs and reports of flu. We will provide additional alerts to Member States as the situation evolves or if current recommendations change.

### 3. References

- AU-IBAR: Animal Resources Information System (ARIS)
- AU-IBAR website: <https://www.au-ibar.org/>
- AU-PANVAC website: [www.aupanvac.org](http://www.aupanvac.org)
- Africa CDC - [Framework for One Health Practice in National Public Health Institutes](#)
- Africa CDC - [Africa CDC Event-based Surveillance Framework](#)
- OIE - [Update on Avian Influenza](#)
- OIE - [Questions and Answers on High Pathogenic H5N8 Avian influenza strain](#)

### 4. Contacts

**Africa CDC: E-mail:** [AfricaCDCEBS@africa-union.org](mailto:AfricaCDCEBS@africa-union.org)

**AU-IBAR: E-mail:** [DiseaseReports@au-ibar.org](mailto:DiseaseReports@au-ibar.org)

**AU-PANVAC: Phone:** +251 114 338 001      **E-mail:** [aupanvac@africa-union.org](mailto:aupanvac@africa-union.org)