



BACKGROUND

December through April generally bring a heightened risk for avian influenza introduction and spread in the northern hemisphere. **FAO calls upon countries, especially those of sub-Saharan Africa, to ensure that preparedness and contingency measures are in place.**

Wild bird mortalities observed in December 2016 in Uganda, at the shores of Lake Victoria, marked the first time that a high pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) virus was reported in East Africa. This H5N8 HPAI virus was introduced by wild birds during winter migration and showed genetic similarity with viruses found in Europe and Central Asia during the months before. A new wave of HPAI viruses

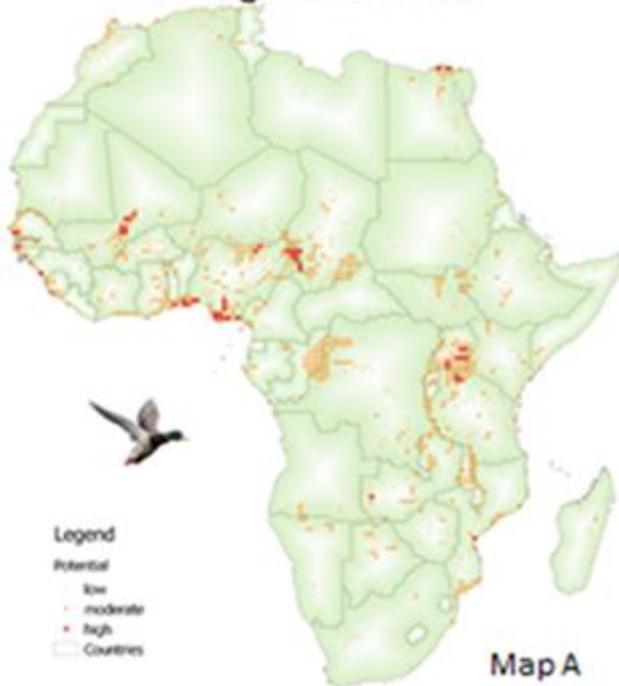
has been reported from European and Central Asian countries also these past months and (re-)introduction into countries of Sub-Saharan Africa is to be expected. At the same time, H5N1 HPAI outbreaks in poultry continue to be reported from Nigeria and, sporadically, from surrounding countries. Even though its reports seem to be declining, there is a possibility for seasonal re-emergence and sporadic spread in West African countries.

In addition, the potential for H5N8 HPAI to be endemically maintained in local poultry populations or persist in resident aquatic birds remains to be investigated. During 2017, H5N8 HPAI continued to spread southwards into subequatorial Africa, where poultry outbreaks continue to be reported from South Africa since early July.

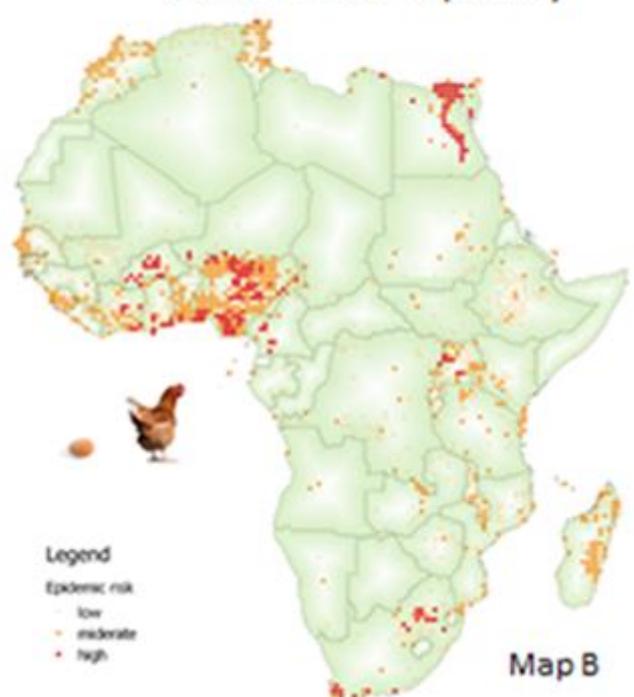
ASSESSMENT

Two maps were generated, assessing geographical risk for HPAI introduction through migratory wild birds (Map A; *information on data sources upon request*) and geographical risk for sustained circulation in poultry (Map B; *based on the H5 suitability models described by Dhingra et al., 2016*).

Potential for HPAI introduction through wild birds



Potential for sustained HPAI transmission in poultry



Thus, countries at highest risk of HPAI virus introduction through wild birds include Egypt, Uganda, Tanzania, Chad, Cameroon, Nigeria, Benin, Togo, Mali, Guinea and Senegal. Those at highest risk of sustained virus circulation in poultry include Tunisia, Egypt, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Africa, Cameroon, Nigeria, Niger, Benin, Togo, Burkina Faso, Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. Awareness raising, surveillance and other preventive measures should be targeted in the areas of high and moderate risk.

FAO ADVISES COUNTRIES AT RISK TO

- Identify high-risk areas of incursion/spill-over for HPAI (high-density poultry areas, backyard free ranging production systems with a wild bird interface, live bird markets, cross-border entry points, production systems with an important wild bird interface), see maps A and B, above, and GEMP pp. 25-29: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-ba0137e.pdf>
- Raise awareness within the general population, poultry producers and marketers, backyard farmers and hunters about HPAI, identified high-risk areas, precautionary measures as well as reporting mechanisms for sick or dead birds (hotline, collection points), see GEMP p.45: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-ba0137e.pdf>
- Revisit suspicious and confirmed case definitions of HPAI with baseline/frontline veterinary staff in high risk areas. For guidance: https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/emergency_management/downloads/hpai/case_definition.pdf
- Assess levels of preparedness, notably (but not exclusively) the status of contingency plans, field and diagnostic capacities and material and equipment for rapid response such as disinfectants and personal protective equipment sets, see GEMP: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-ba0137e.pdf>
- Initiate/revise the compensation policy; Ensure compensation for poultry culled as part of control measures during an HPAI outbreak is provided in a timely manner, see GEMP pp. 18-19: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-ba0137e.pdf>
- Make sure laboratory equipment is adequate and functional with means for laboratory testing are in place to detect the currently circulating avian influenza viruses, see Preparing for Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza, section 4.4: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i0808e.pdf> and consult the OFFLU website : www.offlu.net

- Develop an action plan and standard operating procedures (SOPs) for stamping out cleaning and disinfection, movement control, market closure, tracing of poultry movements, etc.
- Have a protocol for carcasses removal and disposal in place to dispose of infected carcasses after culling in a manner that will avoid any risk of spreading the virus or environmental damage, see Preparing for Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza, section 4.2.2.1: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i0808e.pdf>
- Ensure proper material and equipment (e.g. bulldozers) as well as personal protective equipment sets are available for farm workers and animal health personnel to conduct the removal and disposal of infected carcasses/material
- Provide restocking programmes with detailed instructions on how to follow flocks after restocking, see Preparing for Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza, section 4.2.2.1: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i0808e.pdf>
- Initiate resource mobilization for increased preparedness, communication and, in case of virus incursion, response activities;
- Participate in a regional approach by coordinating activities and sharing information with other countries in the region;
- Countries with areas identified as of high risk for sustained HPAI transmission in poultry, and in particular those affected by HPAI in the past, should implement regular environmental sampling (once or twice a month) of main live bird markets (LBMs); positive detections should be followed up with market closure (for cleaning and disinfection) as well as investigation and additional surveillance in farms of the catchment area. Weekly LBM rest days with cleaning and disinfection are general good practice.
- Revise and/or enhance biosecurity measures implemented in farms and markets (cleaning, disinfection, disposable coveralls...) and keep poultry and other animals away from wild birds through screens, fencing or nets, see Biosecurity for Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza, pp. 22-28: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i0359e.pdf>
- Veterinary services should conduct an epidemiological investigation in case of a suspected HPAI outbreak (clinical examination, sampling, contact tracing, isolation of the affected farm, temporary movement controls, etc.): <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i0808e.pdf>
- Good food safety practices and personal protection when handling carcasses should be applied. Properly cooked poultry products are generally safe for consumption. See [WHO website on food safety issues](#).

IMPORTANT LINKS

- [H5N8 HPAI Global Disease Situation Update](#)
- [Sub-Saharan Africa HPAI Situation Update](#)
- [FAO Focus on: Highly pathogenic H5 avian influenza in 2016 and 2017 – observations and future perspectives](#)
- **FAO Animal Health Manual: [Good Emergency Management Practice: Standard Operating Procedures for HPAI Response](#)**
- [H5N8 highly pathogenic avian influenza \(HPAI\) of clade 2.3.4.4 detected through surveillance of wild migratory birds in the Tyva Republic, the Russian Federation – potential for international spread \(EMPRES Watch\)](#)
- [Good Emergency Management Practice: The Essentials \(FAO Animal Health Manual\)](#)
- [Biosecurity for Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza \(FAO Animal Health Manual\)](#)
- [Preparing for Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza \(FAO Animal Health Manual\)](#)
- [Wild Birds and Avian Influenza \(FAO Animal Health Manual\)](#)
- [FAO's Avian Influenza webpage](#)
- [OIE Avian Influenza page](#)
- [WHO Avian Influenza page](#)

- [AUSVETPLAN for avian influenza](#)

EMPRES website ::: <http://www.fao.org/AG/empres.html>
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