

## Annex A

# Guidance on taking photographs of birds for identification purposes

(source: European Commission DG Sanco 2006)

The following simple guidance will assist non-specialists in taking photographs, especially of dead birds, that will allow subsequent identification to species. Different bird species are identified by differing characteristics, so it is difficult to provide universal guidance applicable in all situations. However, the following is a minimum standard that should be followed.

All wild birds collected for analysis for HPAI should have digital photographs taken as soon as possible after collection. The bird should fully fill the photograph<sup>16</sup> and wherever possible include a ruler or other scale measure. Photographs should be taken of:

- the whole bird, dorsal side, with one wing stretched out and tail spread and visible;
- the head in profile clearly showing the beak;
- close-up photos of the tips of wing feathers can often determine whether the bird is an adult or a juvenile (bird in its first year);
- ideally photographs of both dorsal and ventral views of the bird should be taken<sup>17</sup>; and
- any ventral photographs should show the legs and feet (since leg colour is often an important species diagnostic). If any rings (metal or plastic) are present on the legs, these should be photographed in situ as well as recording ring details.

Any conspicuous markings/patterns should be photographed.

In late summer (July - late August) many waterbirds and especially ducks and geese undergo moult and can be especially difficult to identify by non-specialists. At this time of year there is especially the need for clear photographs to aid identification of duck carcasses. The patch of colour on the open wing (called the "speculum") is often especially useful. The identification of young gulls at any time of the year is also difficult and typically they will also need to be photographed and identified by specialists.

Photographs should be retained, linked to an individual specimen, at least until laboratory tests are returned as negative for AI.

Photographs can be used immediately if identification of the species of bird is in any doubt, and for subsequent checking of the identification if necessary.

<sup>16</sup> Each photograph should be taken at the highest resolution possible and if the camera has a 'date stamp' feature then this should be enabled so that the image is saved with a time reference – this may help verify the sequence of images taken at a site on a day. Images should be downloaded to a computer as soon as possible and information about location and date added to the file properties.

<sup>17</sup> Photographs of the upper and under surfaces of the wing and spread tail will facilitate aging and sexing of birds (e.g. Pintail *Anas acuta*).