



P.M.A. Hakeem

सत्यमेव जयते

सचिव

भारत सरकार

Secretary
Government of
India

कृषि मंत्रालय
पशुपालन, डेयरी और मत्स्यपालन विभाग
कृषि भवन, नई दिल्ली-110 001
Ministry of Agriculture
Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying &
Fisheries
Krishi Bhawan, New Delhi-110 001

D.O.No. 4880/Secy.(ADF)/2005

Dated, the 16th November, 2005.

Dear Shri

India is presently not affected by Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI). We have been carrying out active surveillance in poultry and other birds for the last four years. However, on-going outbreaks of highly pathogenic H5N1 in Asia and more recently in Europe have raised concerns about the source of infection, the risk to humans from various exposures and the probable start of an influenza pandemic if the virus mutates into a form that is highly infectious for humans. In view of the immediacy of the threat WHO/FAO/OIE (World Organisation for Animal Health) have recommended that all countries take urgent action to prepare for a pandemic.

2. 'Animal Husbandry' is a State subject under the Indian federal structure. However, to assist in preparedness planning, this Department has developed an Action Plan in respect of HPAI. The draft Action Plan was discussed in a meeting with the State Secretaries of Animal Husbandry organised by the Government of India on 26th October, 2005 at New Delhi.

3. I am enclosing a copy of the Action Plan developed by the Government of India. I would like to emphasise the following points for your personal attention:

- (i) While we need to prepare for any eventuality, abundant caution should be exercised to ensure that our actions and words do not create a scare among the poultry producers and consumers as also the public at large. It needs to be emphasised that adequate surveillance measures are in place and there is presently no cause for worry regarding poultry health especially since more than 18,000 samples tested so far at the High Security Animal Disease Laboratory (HSADL) at Bhopal have tested negative for HPAI.
- (ii) Several phase-wise opportunities to intervene exist moving from a pre-outbreak phase through suspicion of an outbreak to confirmation of an HPAI outbreak and culminating in other bio-security measures till freedom from disease is established. The Action Plan describes strategic actions that can be undertaken to capitalize on each opportunity to intervene. Control of the disease at source i.e. in birds is the principal way to reduce opportunities for spread of the disease and for possible human infection. Therefore, disease intelligence, active animal surveillance and strengthening the Early Warning System in the pre-outbreak stage and total culling in prescribed radius in the out-break phase are critical. Random samples should be collected and forwarded regularly to the five Regional Disease Diagnostics Laboratories/HSADL, Bhopal especially from areas visited by migratory birds during period of migration. However, as explained in the Action Plan, in case of any suspicion, it is of utmost importance that proper disease investigations are carried out and samples sent to HSADL, Bhopal without any loss of time.
- (iii) Compensation is an issue that will impact on early and honest reporting of suspicion of disease in poultry as also the success of the culling operations. Therefore, it is advised that immediate and adequate compensation is paid for culled poultry as a confidence building measure in poultry producers. State Governments need to allocate sufficient resource to cover such compensation.



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- (iv) Prevention of activities and behaviors that expose other birds and the humans to virus is extremely important as explained in the Action Plan. Strategic action in this regard includes restriction of movement in notified zone, protective clothing, fogging, use of dis-infectants etc. The State Governments should immediately ensure procurement and availability of protective clothing (for investigations/culling etc.), equipment (fogging machines etc.) training to veterinary staff, formation of Rapid Response Teams at appropriate levels (considering geographical size, size of poultry, influx of migratory birds etc.), and an effective and sustainable system of monitoring at the State level.
- (v) HPAI requires co-ordinated action between different agencies viz. veterinary, health, forests, police, district administration, municipal and panchayat authorities etc. on a regular and sustainable basis. Collaboration between the animal health and the public health sectors is especially required to be strengthened. Mechanisms to ensure the same may be suitably designed and put in place by the State Governments.
- (vi) On-going risk communication to industry and public especially rural residents (since backyard poultry is emerging as an extremely vulnerable category) is needed to explain well-known and avoidable behaviors with a high risk of infection without causing panic and alarm.
- (vii) Sufficient number of copies of the Action Plan are being sent to Secretary/Director of Animal Husbandry of your State so that a few copies can be made available to the veterinary authorities of each district. However, steps will have to be taken by the State Government for translation of the 'Action Plan' into regional languages and its printing so as to circulate to all the officials of Animal Husbandry Departments and other concerned agencies in the districts.
4. I shall be grateful if immediate action is taken on the above lines and I am apprised of the same.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,

(P.M.A. Hakeem)

Shri
Chief Secretary,
Government of