

Rapid advice 06-2015 of the Scientific Committee of the FASFC on a assessment of the risk of introduction of the highly pathogenic avian influenza virus in Belgium, particularly the H5N8 strain via wild birds, taking into account the current epidemiological context: evaluation of the period of increased risk.

Several outbreaks of avian influenza caused by highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5N8 were recorded in the EU since early November 2014.

The Scientific Committee is asked to give an opinion, via an accelerated procedure, on the length of the period of increased risk for introduction of the highly pathogenic avian influenza H5N8 virus and to justify this period by scientific arguments. As periods of increased risk are combined with specific preventive biosecurity measures, the Scientific Committee gives also an opinion on these preventive measures.

The Scientific Committee is of the opinion that the period of increased risk can be stopped in March 2015 and that the measures have no longer to be prolonged because the risk of introduction of highly pathogenic avian influenza virus is lower during spring migration than during autumn migration of wild birds. The Committee recommends to encourage private holders of birds and poultry to (continue to) notify mortality cases in order to reinforce the passive surveillance for avian influenza in our country.

In order to provide a sustainable response to the question, the Scientific Committee proposes a warning system with three risk levels based on scientific parameters established according to signal capture outside Belgium. The three risk levels are basic vigilance, increased vigilance and increased risk. This warning system will be published in a subsequent opinion of the Scientific Committee.

The full text is available on this website in dutch and in french, respectively under the section "Wetenschappelijk Comité/Adviezen" and "Comité scientifique/Avis".