

UNITED STATES ANIMAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION - 2005

RESOLUTION: 44 APPROVED

SOURCE: COMMITTEE ON TRANSMISSIBLE DISEASES OF
POULTRY AND OTHER AVIAN SPECIES

SUBJECT MATTER: IMPORTATION OF RAW GAME BIRD CARCASSES FROM
AREAS KNOWN TO BE INFECTED WITH NEWCASTLE
DISEASE AND HIGHLY PATHOGENIC AVIAN INFLUENZA

DATES: Hershey, Pennsylvania – November 3-9, 2005

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Current regulations on importation of carcasses, parts or products of carcasses, and eggs (other than hatching eggs) of poultry, game birds, or other birds from regions where exotic Newcastle disease (END) or highly pathogenic avian influenza subtype H5N1 is considered to exist appear to allow entry of raw carcasses of game birds with feathers attached. The relevant section of 9 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Chapter 1, Part 94, Section 94.6 (pages 495-499 in the January 1, 2005, revision) states in paragraph (b) (1) "Carcasses of game birds may be imported if eviscerated, with heads and feet removed. Viscera, heads, and feet removed from game birds are ineligible for entry into the United States." Dr. Glen L. Snider, Animal Quarantine Inspection (AQI), Veterinary Medical Officer (VMO) with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) further indicates that USDA, Animal and Plant Inspection Services (APHIS), Wildlife Services (WS) and Veterinary Services (VS) require some if not all of the feathers to be left intact on the carcass (typically a wing or the cape) as a means of identification of the game bird species. The remainder of Section 94.6 [paragraphs (b) (2) through (5)] describes numerous requirements for cooking, processing, and handling of other poultry products originating from, being processed in, or even passing through areas considered to be infected with END. There are at least two serious loopholes in this regulation that threaten the United States poultry industries. First, both of the referenced viruses can reside in tissues other than heads, feet, and viscera. While removing the heads and viscera eliminates some of the most dangerous materials, a raw, feathered carcass from an infected bird could still carry infectious amounts of virus. Secondly, the reason for singling out H5N1 is unclear; any highly pathogenic avian influenza virus should be cause for exclusion of raw carcasses. While the opening paragraph singles out H5N1 highly pathogenic avian influenza, the remainder of section 94.6 refers only to END.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) urges the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS) to amend 9 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Chapter I, Part 94, Section 94.6 by deleting paragraph (b) (1), which allows importation from areas where exotic Newcastle Disease (END) is considered to exist on raw carcasses of game birds with heads, viscera, and feet removed. Importation of game bird carcasses and parts or products of carcasses should occur under the same restrictions in place for poultry and other birds found in paragraphs (b) (2) through (5) of Section 94.6. Furthermore, the restriction to only the H5N1 subtype of highly pathogenic avian influenza should be deleted, and the entire section worded such that the restrictions in paragraphs (b) (2) through (5) apply to all areas where END or any subtype of highly pathogenic avian influenza is considered to exist.

RESPONSE:

ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH INSPECTION SERVICE, VETERINARY SERVICES (APHIS-VS)

Title 9 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Chapter 1, Part 94, defines game birds as "migratory birds, including certain ducks, geese, pigeons, and doves ("migratory" refers to seasonal flight to and from the United States); free-flying quail, wild grouse, wild pheasants (as opposed to those that are commercial, domestic, or pen-raised)". The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) recognizes that the provisions currently written in Title 9 CFR Part 94.6(b)(1) can raise a concern that this regulation could potentially be a pathway for the introduction and dissemination of END into the United States.

In the past, this regulation has applied to hunter-harvested, eviscerated migratory game birds from Mexico. Mexico is classified by the USDA as a region affected with exotic Newcastle disease (END). However, based on the definition of game birds, the carcasses obtained from seasonal migratory game birds which are carried into the United States in compliance with 94.6(b)(1) are the same birds that fly into the United States during their seasonal flight. "We will re-evaluate the importation of seasonal game birds classified by the USDA from regions affected with exotic foreign animal disease.

We agree with USAHA's concern that the existing regulations should include other subtypes of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in addition to HPAI subtype H5N1. A work order has been initiated to amend existing regulations to include restrictions relative to any subtype of HPAI.