

The Netherlands, 9 December 2005

To the EU Council, att. Ministers of Agriculture:

Bundesministerium für Gesundheit und Frauen,
Austria

Agence Fédérale pour la Sécurité de la Chaîne Alimentaire,
Belgium

Ministry of Agriculture of the Czech Republic

Veterinary Services and Ministry of Agriculture,
Natural Resources and Environment, Cyprus

Danish Veterinary and Food Administration, Veterinary
Service

Ministry of Agriculture, Estonia

Maa- ja metsätalousministeriö Elintarvike- ja terveystoisto,
Finland

Ministère de l'Agriculture, de la Pêche et des Affaires Rurales
Direction Générale de l'Alimentation
Sous-Direction de la Santé et de la Protection Animale,
France

Bundesministerium für Verbraucherschutz,
Ernährung und Landwirtschaft, Germany

Ministry of Agriculture, Directorate General of Veterinary
Services
Directorate K.A.F.E., Greece

Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development,
Department of Animal Health and Food Control, Hungary

Department of Agriculture and Food, Agriculture House,
Ireland

Ministero della Salute, Dipartimento della Prevenzione e della
Comunicazione,
Direzione Generale della Sanità Veterinaria e degli Alimenti,
Italy

Ministry of Agriculture, Latvia

Ministry of Agriculture, Lithuania

Administration des Services Vétérinaires du Grand-Duché de
Luxembourg

Ministry for Rural Affairs and the Environment
Food and Veterinary Regulation Division, Malta

Ministerie van Landbouw, Natuur en Voedselkwaliteit, The
Netherlands

Veterinary Inspection, General Veterinary Inspectorate,
Poland

Direcção Geral de Veterinária, Portugal

Ministry of Agriculture of the Slovak Republic

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food, Slovenia
Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación
Dirección General de Ganadería, Subdirección General de
Ordenación y Buenas Prácticas, Spain

Jordbruksverket, Sweden

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Exotic Disease Prevention and Control Division, United
Kingdom

Dear Madam, dear Sir,

Last week the European Parliament voted for the amendments which were approved by the Agriculture Committee, concerning the Proposal for a Council Directive on Community measures for the control of Avian Influenza (a proposal for a Council Decision amending Council Decision 90/424/EEC on expenditure in the veterinary field).

After Parliament's vote, on Thursday last week, the ball will be in the court of the Council, which plans to push through the legislation (a priority of the UK Presidency) before the end of the year. The Council will assemble on December 19th - 21st.

We would like to emphasise the view of non-commercial/pet holders' organisations to the Council: there are no more excuses *not* to vaccinate!

Up till now the authorities - whether they are the Ministers, the MP's, MEP's or the politicians in general, the WHO, OIE or the FAO - have all been holding back on a definite YES to vaccination.

Either trade issues are at stake, or the available vaccines are said to be not yet effective enough, more research is said to be necessary, there would be no registered vaccines in Europe and the costs are said to be too high (each bird has to be injected twice with an interval of 4 weeks).

But we - the EU - cannot afford to hold back. Bird flu is out of control in Asia, where China and Indonesia (with the help of Dutch experts) have started a vaccination programme. From Romania and this week even from Ukraine (not the EU, but Europe nevertheless) the reports of new outbreaks keep coming. And very alarmingly in Zimbabwe HPAI H5 has been found. What if it turns out to be H5N1, Africa will not be able to control this disease, not logistically and not economically! Another continent out of control!

Even the poultry industry itself, which has been objecting to vaccination for years, is now asking for abandoning the non-vaccination programme, but demands trade guarantees.

The European Parliament has accepted amendment 112, art. 58, par. 3 (new): *“to permit vaccination if a threatening international situation arises, without this leading to restrictions on Community trade”* and amendment 105, art. 53, par. 1 sub a: *vaccination against avian influenza is prohibited on their territory, except as provided for in Sections 2 and 3 and except if the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) anticipates an international threat of avian influenza or if a Member State intends to introduce extra measures for poultry.*

This combined with the news of Dutch research* on the effectiveness of vaccines should take away any hesitation to start a vaccination programme in Europe. Especially the conclusion of the named research is very convincing:

‘Vaccination is a means to stop the spreading of these very virulent bird flu viruses and therefore a means to take away the source of human contamination.’

All supporting non-commercial/pet holders’ organisations insist, like many times before, that the EU takes its responsibility and orders all member states to start vaccinating commercial poultry, the best way to control an outbreak of H5N1. This way, non-commercial and smallholders of pet poultry and other birds are no longer obliged to keep their birds inside for months, which is not even practicable for holders of waterfowl (without open space and water their birds die).

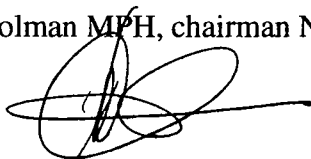
It must, however, be clear that non-commercial/pet holders should have the *possibility* to vaccinate if their situation demands such; but by no means should non-commercial/pet holders be *obliged* to vaccinate, because the risk of these holdings is almost zero, as many experts have stated many times.

Now is the time for the European Union to show what is in fact the worth and added value of being a union to all her inhabitants.

EU Ministers of Agriculture: this is a wake up call. **‘Act before it’s too late!’**

With the utmost regards on behalf of

Paula Polman MPH, chairman NBvH (Dutch Smallholder Association)



Christine Bijl, Secretary

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*CIDC Lelystad, published on-line December 5, 2005: *Proceedings for the National Academy of Sciences*, DOI:10.1073/pnas.0505098102

*On behalf of the supporting organisations
below:*

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Søren Thomassen, president

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ZEL (Zentralverband europäischer Laufentenhalter/Central European
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Call Duck Association UK
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www.callducks.net

The Indian Runner Duck Association, UK
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