OIE Regional Expert Group Meeting for diseases of poultry in Asia and the Pacific Region

Hokkaido University, Sapporo, Hokkaido, Japan

2-4 October 2019

Considering that:

- There are many factors that may influence the spread of Avian Influenza (AI) and other poultry diseases, including environmental factors, wild bird migration, live bird markets, consumer preferences, formal and informal trade, festival periods, farming and biosecurity practices.

- All high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) viruses and low pathogenicity avian influenza (LPAI) viruses have potential for mutation, including silent infections and should be considered significant as a poultry disease or a zoonotic disease.

- LPAI subtype H9N2 is widely reported in the Asia Pacific region and poses an emerging threat to the poultry sector.

- Co-infection with multiple viruses and bacteria can lead to clinical syndromes and poor production in poultry, leading to difficulties in identifying individual causes for disease.

- Good management, husbandry, biosecurity and biosafety practices on poultry farms and in live bird markets are essential components in poultry systems to improve health and production and to reduce or possibly eradicate viruses such as avian influenza and Newcastle disease and other infectious poultry diseases.

- Cross border trade and value chains play significant roles in the spread of poultry diseases, including zoonotic diseases.

- Partnerships between the public and the private commercial sectors can provide mechanisms to address prevention, preparedness and control of poultry diseases.

- Regular information sharing and discussion among researchers, public and private sectors as well as other stakeholders working on poultry diseases and influenza in Asia Pacific region allows for improved understanding and develops effective networks.

- New technologies such as metagenomics may be useful to detect a variety of diseases, including novel and emerging diseases.

The meeting therefore recommends:

< Surveillance & Control measures>

- Continued active and passive surveillance for circulating strains of influenza, including at the animal/human/wildlife interface is needed for rapid outbreak containment, monitoring and early detection of new pandemics.

- Silent infections and LPAI are monitored with ongoing surveillance to understand their role as a poultry disease, a zoonotic disease and the potential for mutation.

- Close monitoring and surveillance in wild and domestic waterfowls is essential, since they are important reservoir species for influenza viruses and silent infection (carriers) is possible. Control strategies targeting domestic waterfowl (where they are present) should be implemented to reduce spread of avian influenza.

- Strict control measures to rapidly contain outbreaks of contagious poultry diseases should be applied as per The OIE *Terrestrial Animal Health Code*; however, adequate financial and human resources for implementation and compensation is essential for these policies to be effective.

- Implementing stamping out as the primary measure to control and eradicate avian influenza viruses especially at the early stage of outbreaks in a non-endemic situation.

- Vaccination be considered as an additional option in support of stamping out provided Post-vaccination surveillance (such as the use of sentinel birds) and an exit strategy are in place whenever vaccination is practiced. Vaccination should be in line with existing international standards and guidelines (e.g. OIE Standards and Guidelines, and OFFLU vaccination guidelines).

- Co-infection with multiple viruses and bacteria be considered for causes of clinical disease and poor production, even when avian influenza is isolated.

- Where H9N2 viruses are isolated, hygiene and biosecurity practices at live bird markets and farms should be investigated and improved practices should be implemented to reduce spread of the viruses. Ongoing surveillance for presence of H9N2, other influenza viruses and other pathogens should also be conducted.

- Cross border trade and value chains of poultry should be closely monitored to identify risk hotspots and likely pathways for disease spread.

<Information sharing>

- New and reoccurrence of infections are notified to OIE within 24 hours of laboratory confirmation and detailed virus information should be shared among networks as soon as it is available

< Collaboration>

- Veterinary services are encouraged to consider programs where high biosecurity farms can attain local recognition through accreditation as an avian influenza free (or other infectious poultry disease) farm without vaccination.

- The Veterinary authorities to embark on public-private partnerships (PPP), guided by the OIE PPP Handbook, to improve trust and communication between the sectors and ensure mutual understanding and effective implementation of disease control measures.

<Diagnostics>

- Diagnostic capacity for avian diseases is continually evaluated and updated as novel strains and new diseases emerge.

- Laboratories and research institutes are encouraged to evaluate and pilot potential novel diagnostics for the rapid on-site detection of avian influenza and Newcastle disease viruses (e.g. pen-side PCR).

Proposal

A regional network in Asia and the Pacific under the FAO/OIE GFTADs mechanism for poultry diseases with experts from member countries & territories to share information on diseases and control practices to be led by OIE reference laboratories in the region with support from OIE RRAP. A TOR for the regional network shall be drafted by the OIE RRAP in consultation with the OIE reference laboratories and FAO RAP.