

National report FVE the Netherlands June 2022

Avian influenza (H5) on poultry farms

Since October 2021 the Netherlands is confronted with a large-scale outbreak of high pathogenic Avian Influenza (H5N1). To date more than 50 farms have been affected and more than 2 million animals have been (preventively) culled. The last outbreak is dated on a hobby farm on the 19th of May. The current outbreak is the most serious since 2003 and has fueled the debate about animal disease control strategies in the Netherlands. Since October 2021 the inside housing of poultry is mandatory and high biosecurity levels, transport bans and preventive culling are the main instruments to control these outbreaks. However, because of the location of the Netherlands as a North Sea delta, where many species of wild birds hibernate, large scale seasonal outbreaks of Avian Influenza are expected to continue. Recurrent and massive culling of poultry seems no longer societally acceptable. Moreover, because of the density of poultry farming in certain regions in the Netherlands there is also a zoonotic risk. RVAN has therefore promoted to clear all technical and economic hurdles for future vaccination strategies.

Shortage of veterinarians in private practice and Dutch Food Safety Authority

In response to signals of lack of veterinary staff and problems with sufficient capacity in emergency care, RVAN has asked the ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality to further examine the actual shortage and possible solutions. These problems do not only occur in private practice. The Dutch Food Safety Authority has a continuous shortage of official veterinarians, as well. Apart from increasing the number of veterinary graduates, it seems essential to reduce the number of young veterinarians that leaves private practice. Several studies show that on average 25% of these young vets stop within the first five years of graduation. Excessive workload, client expectations, lack of career perspectives and insufficient working conditions are the main reasons for the outflow. RVAN will work together with our government, university, corporates and other stakeholders to tackle this issue.

Improving self-regulation and quality assurance in veterinary practice

The lack of a designated veterinary statutory body in the Netherlands has complicated the possibilities for the veterinary profession's self-regulation. RVAN has experienced that promoting the interests of its members (60% of the Dutch veterinarians) and setting the standards for the entire profession is difficult. For this reason, commissioned by the ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality research is done to improve the structure of the Dutch veterinary statutory body. Results are expected after the summer of 2022.