

Over 65% of farms in Coahuila and Durango have been inspected

Authorities from the National Agro-Alimentary Health, Safety and Quality Service (SENASICA) have held meetings with poultry farmers, owners from producer companies, the estatal secretaries of Agriculture and Livestock Development, and the key players from other agencies like the Secretariat of Health and the National Guard.



The health authority has recommended the implementation of various measures to face the emergency and benefit the country's poultry industry.

15 days after confirming the presence of AH7N3 highly pathogenic avian influenza (AI) in Coahuila and Durango, the National Agro-Alimentary Health, Safety and Quality Service (SENASICA) reported that as of today, samples have been collected and processed from 242 production units out of 370, which is a rate of progress slightly above 65%.

The agency from the Secretariat of Agriculture and Rural Development explained that their technicians are working overtime to complete the diagnosis of the situation and determine the sanitary status in the area, which requires sampling 100% of the poultry farms located in the region.

To finish the sampling as soon as possible and timely address the diagnosis demands in the region, the SENASICA reinforced the operational capability of the Level 2 Biosafety Laboratory of Durango, open 24 hours, for work.

Upon confirmation of the AH7N3 avian influenza outbreak in Coahuila and Durango, the SENASICA's Mexico-United States Commission for Prevention of Foot-and-Mouth Disease and other Animal Exotic Diseases (CPA) activated its own emergency protocols to address the sanitary alert affecting the country's commercial poultry farming.

From the epidemiological tracing carried out by the SENASICA's specialists in the region, 44 poultry production units (out of 242) have been ruled infected and are under quarantine measures to minimize the risk that the virus spreads to other farms.

To deactivate the outbreak focuses, 731,081 birds have been slaughtered so far, and disposed of according to sanitary procedures and under official supervision.

The measures established to contain the outbreak include controls to the mobilization of live birds and their products and byproducts, to guarantee that the goods that come out of the farms in Coahuila and Durango do not pose any risk to the rest of the country.

Therefore, to mobilize their products, farms must show negative results to AI as issued by the official laboratories of the SENASICA and be authorized by the General Directorate of Animal Health.

Timeline of the outbreak

On April 21 (Tuesday) poultry producers reported the death of birds in the region to the SENASICA. Immediately technicians from the General Directorate of Animal Health moved to the area to take samples and identify the pathogenic agent causing the death toll.

On April 22 (Friday) at dawn, the SENASICA's technicians, through the rRT-PCR technique, identified the pathogenic agent as the AH7N3 highly pathogenic avian influenza virus, which has been present in our country since 2012. The diagnosis was confirmed the following week after sequencing the virus.

That same Friday the emergency operation to contain the outbreak was launched, and the SENASICA placed the farms in full quarantine and ordered the following counter-epidemic measures: depopulation, cleaning and disinfection, and vacation of the premises.

On April 24 (Sunday), authorities from the SENASICA held a meeting with the poultry producers of the region to explain them the contention strategy and recommend raising the biosafety measures at their farms to contain the viral dissemination.

On the following days, Francisco Javier Trujillo Arriaga, Juan Gay Gutiérrez, and Roberto Navarro López, general directors of the SENASICA, Animal Health, and the CPA, respectively, held meetings to reach high level agreements with the poultry farmers, owners of producer companies, the AMSDA (Mexican Association of Secretaries of Agriculture and Livestock Development), and key actors from other agencies, such as the Secretariat of Health and the National Guard, among others.

The goal of these meetings has been to inform about the AI situation in the country, present the actions being carried out for the control and eradication of the disease nationwide, and agree on the tasks that every actor must carry out to contribute to meeting the objective.

Measures to protect the national poultry farming

To protect the states that have not been affected by the disease, the health authority has recommended the implementation of various

measures to face the emergency and benefit the country's poultry industry, including the following:

Reinforcing biosafety measures at the production units and requesting the verification thereof by official personnel from the SENASICA.

Certifying more veterinarians authorized in charge of poultry, to help compliance with the current animal health laws.

Sending live birds (end of cycle hens, and chicken for fattening) only to slaughter establishments that have the required sanitary controls to guarantee the safety of the product (preferably Federal Inspection Type slaughterhouses), to prevent them from being traded at live birds' markets.

It is recommended that bird waste (poultry litter) is treated with an industrial method that guarantees the destruction of the avian influenza virus, before being used as fertilizer for farming lands.

Purchase chicks and hens for breeding only at farms registered in the SENASICA, with current biosafety measures, and under the supervision of a veterinarian in charge authorized by the agency to manage birds.

Update the seeds used to prepare vaccines to increase their effectiveness against the disease.

Likewise, the agency from the Secretariat of Agriculture insisted on urging all individuals that produce, process, handle, transports, or trades birds to immediately report to the health authorities of any abnormal behavior in their flocks, such as unusual mortality or any other suspicious sign of the disease, to the 24-hour phone number 800 751 2100, or via smartphone through the “AVISE” app.