

# Strategic Vaccination against Avian Influenza AH5N1 begins

Producers must maintain and reinforce biosecurity measures on farms and comply with the provisions on the movement of live birds and their excrement, informed the Secretariat of Agriculture and Rural Development



The vaccines against AH5N1 meet the standards of the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH, founded as OIE), while the National Service for Agro-alimentary Public Health, Safety, and Quality (SENASICA) conducts effectiveness tests

In view of the massive arrival of migratory waterfowl carrying the highly pathogenic AH5N1 avian influenza virus, which has caused outbreaks in domestic poultry in seven states of the country, the Secretariat of Agriculture and Rural Development began vaccinating birds in commercial production units, in areas of high animal health risk and in farms where there are parent and breeding hens.

In the first stage of the vaccination strategy, the National Service for Agro-alimentary Public Health, Safety, and Quality (SENASICA) and the National Union of Poultry Farmers (UNA) plan to vaccinate more than six million birds in production units in Jalisco, Sonora, and Nuevo Leon.

The Director General of Animal Health of the Agriculture Agency, Juan Gay Gutiérrez, led a virtual meeting with more than 600 representatives of the poultry and veterinary pharmaceutical industries, to inform them the strategy and communicate them the requirements that production units must meet in order to access the vaccine.

He emphasized that the vaccination strategy is complementary to the control and eradication actions carried out by technicians of the United States-Mexico Commission for the Prevention of Foot and Mouth Disease and other Exotic Animal Diseases (CPA) of SENASICA in nine Mexican states where the presence of the virus has been confirmed.

The official called on producers to maintain and reinforce the minimum biosecurity measures and to comply with the provisions of the National Animal Health Emergency Plan (Dinesa) regarding the movement of live birds and their excrement.

The director of the CPA, Roberto Navarro López, said that the vaccines that have begun to be applied comply with the standards described in the Terrestrial Manual of the World Organization for Animal Health (OMSA), and have been approved by the General Directorate of Animal Health of SENASICA, in coordination with the UNA and with the technical opinion of the Poultry Health Auxiliary Commission (CASA in Spanish), which consists of technical personnel from the SENASICA and UNA.

He pointed out that the agency, based on the availability of vaccines and the determination of estimated risk, has set vaccination priorities, as to protect parent and breeding hens, since they are the origin of the production chain, as they are the mothers of broilers and egg-laying birds.

He indicated that poultry companies or owners wishing to vaccinate must be registered as Poultry Production Unit (UPA) with Agriculture, with an Authorized Responsible Veterinarian (MVRA). Moreover, they have to show negative results for avian influenza with RT-PCR tests no more than seven days prior to vaccination, since it is strictly forbidden to vaccinate flocks infected with the virus.

He indicated that animals from chicken and organic egg production units, zoo birds, wildlife conservation management units and combat birds can be vaccinated later, provided that the biological product is applied by an MVRA.

The official of the Secretariat of Agriculture pointed out that vaccination does not affect the HPAI free zone status if epidemiological surveillance supports the absence of the disease in those regions.

The president of the Federation of Colleges and Associations of Zootechnical Veterinarians of Mexico (FedMVZ), Arturo Sanchez Mejorada, committed the active participation of veterinary professionals in the strategy that the Secretariat of Agriculture is deploying against HPAI AH5N1.

He added that this year the agency has trained 333 MVRAs in poultry management, and has intensified an outreach campaign so that veterinarians can recognize the signs of the disease in a timely manner and notify them accordingly.

So far, the AH5N1 virus has been found in eight commercial farms: four in Sonora, one in Nuevo León, two in Jalisco and, recently, one in Yucatán, as well as in three backyard farms in Chiapas, Chihuahua and Estado de México, with a total of 1.4 million birds affected, which represents 0.07 percent of the national flock. Therefore, so far, it does not mean any risk for the country's national egg and chicken supply.