

OFFICIAL VACCINATION PLAN
HIGHLY PATHOGENIC AVIAN INFLUENZA (HPAI)
FACT SHEET 1 – THE GROUNDS FOR VACCINATION

Clade H5N1 2.3.4.4b Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) virus has spread around the globe, leading to an epizootic of unprecedented proportions, and creating a constant threat not only for wild birds and farmed poultry but also for mammals, including human beings.

France has been hit by a succession of five crises between 2015 and 2022. It has generally had the largest number of outbreaks in Europe. In the course of the 2021-2022 season, approximately 1,400 outbreaks were detected nationally, leading to the culling of over 22 million birds.

	Period with outbreaks	Numbers of "on-farm" outbreaks	Numbers of "non-farm" outbreaks	Numbers of cases in wild fauna**	Birds culled or dying in "on-farm" outbreaks*	Birds culled outside outbreaks*
2015/2016	24/11/15 to 09/08/2016	81		-	350,000	N/A
2016/2017	28/11/16 to 28/03/17	488	55		2m	2.5m
2020/2021	17/11/20 to 29/04/21	492		22	1.1m	2.2m
2021/2022	26/11/21 to 17/05/22	1,377	35	166	16m	6m
2022/2023	30/07/22 to 11/07/23	402	93	504	6.5m	3.5m

Figure 1 - Table summarising periods with outbreaks, numbers of outbreaks, numbers of cases in wild fauna and numbers of dead or culled birds in and outside outbreaks

The impact of HPAI on the poultry industry is massive, threatening food security and causing major financial and commercial losses, as well as psychological distress among farmers.

There have been successive episodes of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza on an unprecedented scale in Europe and around the world with major societal and economic consequences. The scale of those crises requires that the prevention and control strategies already in force should be backed by poultry vaccination. Vaccination is an additional tool for prevention to manage future crises due to Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI).

RESOLUTION No. 28 OF THE WORLD ORGANISATION FOR ANIMAL HEALTH

In a resolution adopted on 25 May 2023 by the 90th general session of the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH), delegates acknowledged that the current control strategy based on conventional measures such as biosecurity, mass culling and movement restrictions can no longer limit the risk of spread of the virus effectively.

WOAH delegates called for the identification of innovative solutions to control HPAI, with vaccination foremost among them.

Vaccination has therefore been recognised by WOAH as an additional tool for controlling the disease, one that must be founded on strict surveillance to demonstrate the absence of circulation of the virus. Recourse to vaccination should not lead to negative consequences for international trade insofar as member countries follow WOAH standards.

EU COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS

On 24 May 2022, the Council of the European Union approved conclusions on a strategic approach to the development of vaccination as an additional tool for the prevention and control of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI)

THE SCIENTIFIC BASIS FOR THE FRENCH STRATEGY

ANSES, the French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health & Safety, was asked to evaluate several scenarios from the epidemiological standpoint in order to define a strategy for the vaccination of poultry against HPAI. ANSES published its opinion at the end of March 2023 (consultation no. 2022-SA-0165).

According to the formal opinion of ANSES, the combination of risks of introduction of the virus via wild avian fauna (a case of HPAI detected in France since the 1 August 2022), plus the spread of the virus and the lack of efficacy of control measures, is contributing to an increase in the number of crises.

That opinion concludes that only a preventive vaccination strategy limited to the most vulnerable forms of production with regard to the risk of introduction and spread of HPAI is relevant to achieving the two above-mentioned objectives in the present context.

Given the context in which it is highly probable that the HPAI virus is becoming endemic, the experts recommend the application of vaccination targets across the whole of France, with particular attention being paid to areas subject to the risk of spread (*Zone à Risque de Diffusion* – ZRD) and areas subject to specific risk (*Zone à Risque Particulier* – ZRP).

In light of the particularly worrying epidemiological context, the Agency emphasises the importance of implementing the broadest possible vaccination strategy, as permitted by the available resources.

This input from ANSES has defined a framework for reflection on the implementation of a vaccination campaign beginning in the autumn of 2023, setting priorities for the target populations and areas for implementation. This scientific input was then confronted with the technical, economic and zootechnical aspects in order to get to a possible vaccination strategy for preventive purposes in 2023 with the aim of forestalling a further epizootic flare-up while at the same time limiting the impacts on exports, the operational feasibility of the campaign, and cost.

France's chosen vaccination strategy is described in fact sheet no. 3.

For more information:

- **WOAH Resolution no. 28: – Strategic challenges in the global control of high pathogenicity avian influenza**
<https://www.woah.org/fr/document/projet-de-resolution-n-28-defis-strategiques-afferents-au-controle-mondial-de-linfluenza-aviaire-de-haute-pathogenicite-2/>
- **The EU Council conclusions:**
<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/fr/press/press-releases/2022/05/24/council-approves-conclusions-on-a-strategic-approach-for-the-development-of-vaccination-as-a-complementary-tool-for-the-prevention-and-control-of-highly-pathogenic-avian-influenza-hpai/>
- **The ANSES Opinion on the development of a national vaccination strategy for Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in galliform species:**
<https://www.anses.fr/fr/system/files/SABA2022SA0165.pdf>