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Risk of spreading avian influenza via trade

Activities by man often spread AI. These include staff movement between sheds and farms, the movement of infected bird and products derived from them, and the movement of contaminated equipment and supplies. In many countries, legislation prohibits the movement of many things from a known HPAI farm.

The OIE's Terrestrial Animal Health Code provides sanitary recommendations to facilitate safe international trade and stresses the importance of risk assessment and safety. To have safe international trade, sensible, transparent and objective import regulations based on international standards is an essential prerequisite.

The level of risk of spreading influenza virus via trade depends upon:

- The ability to confirm an area is free from avian influenza.
- Type of influenza virus involved, for example is it shed via the respiratory route.
- Importation of live animals or not.
- Type of food products imported.
- Types of any mitigation process used, for example vaccination.

In reality, the greatest risk of spreading avian influenza is by the shipping of live birds in the acute phase of the disease when they are shedding high levels of virus.

If we look at the risk of introducing avian influenza via various products it declines as you go down this list:

- Live poultry (excluding day olds).
- Live birds of other species.
- Day old live poultry.
- Hatching eggs.
- Eggs for human consumption.
- Egg products.
- Other products from poultry, for example semen and raw meat.

One also has to remember illegal bird movements, for example fighting cockerels in south east Asia. Illegal importations of products can and do occur and these will bypass any control measures and monitoring requirements.

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