

Information on the handling of bird parts

Bird flu, an epidemic

Back in January 2004 the World Health Organisation (WHO) confirmed the emergence of influenza viruses which could affect the health of birds and consequently humans. It was in the form of a poultry disease, colloquially called "bird flu". Originally it arose above all in the Asian region, but individual cases were reported in Europe and recently in Austria. The disease is to be found in chickens, turkeys and numerous wild bird species and can in the first place cause considerable economic damage.

NB: At present throughout the world this is a veterinary medical problem, namely a bird epidemic in the form of a poultry disease ("bird flu"). The danger to humans lies primarily in the possible mutation of the virus. If and when such a mutation will occur, cannot be foretold by anyone at present.

Measures against the spread of "bird flu" in Austria

Since mid-February several wild birds have perished in Austria from bird flu, so the Federal Ministry for Health and Women has ordered certain measures to be taken, aimed at preventing the transmission of bird flu to domestic poultry. According to these measures, throughout the country, all poultry must be housed in closed sheds or other suitable premises. Furthermore every wild bird found dead must be reported to the official veterinary surgeon for the relevant local authority.

NB: The cases of bird flu which have so far arisen in Austria have been established exclusively in wild birds. So far no domestic poultry have caught the disease.

Transmission and protection of humans

In principle, "bird flu" is only transmitted from bird to bird. Contagion to humans from an infected animal is indeed fundamentally possible, but in any event only occurs in the case of extremely close contact between bird and human (particularly in Asia, where

Information sheet on poultry disease and influenza pandemics

humans and birds live together in very close proximity). The direct transmission of this virus from one infected human to another has not thus far been established. The influenza virus multiplies in birds over time through all the organs and is exuded in mucus and excrement, with the excrement being particular virus-laden. Transmission to humans is suspected to occur through contact with poultry and its excretions when there is a lack of hand hygiene or the inhalation of virus-laden dust particles.

Viruses can also enter the eggs and flesh of infected birds. Through its extreme sensitivity to heat, however, the risk of transmission to humans through food is estimated to be extremely low. Cooked or otherwise heated food (> 70° C) can be considered free of infectious virus. Freezing does not deactivate the virus however!

In the handling of bird parts the following hygiene measures must be strictly maintained:

- Mouth protection (mouth and nose masks, FFP3 with valve)
- Eye protection (with lateral protection)
- Protective clothing (one-piece protective suits with long sleeves and cuff bands, one-piece overalls, ventilated protective suits only for aerosol-producing measures)
- Gloves, extending over the cuffs
- Headwear (the hair must be completely covered)
- Suitably disinfected boots (e.g. rubber boots)
- Hygienic hand disinfectant with alcoholic disinfectant after removal of gloves and masks (all substances for hygienic hand disinfection included in the expert list of the ÖGHMP (Österreichische Gesellschaft für Hygiene, Mikrobiologie und Präventivmedizin = Austrian Association for Hygiene, Microbiology and Preventive Medicine) are suitable).

Status: February 2006

For further information you can contact the **Info-Hotline** of the Austrian Agency for Health and Food Safety on **050 555 666**.



Information sheet on poultry disease and influenza pandemics

Legal notice:

This document makes no claim to be complete and offers no guarantee.

There is more detailed information at www.ages.at and www.bmgf.gv.at, where the Austrian Pandemic Plan as well as the “Crisis Plan for Classic Bird Flu and Newcastle Disease 2000” can be downloaded.