



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE WATER AND FORESTRY

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VETERINARY PUBLIC NOTIFICATION NO. 4 of 2019

OUTBREAK OF HIGHLY PATHOGENIC AVIAN INFLUENZA (H5N8) ON HALIFAX ISLAND NEAR !NAMINUS (LÜDERITZ) IN THE !KARAS REGION

(Issued in terms of the Animal Health Act, 2011)

The Directorate of Veterinary Services in the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry hereby informs the farmers and the general public about the confirmation of the first outbreak of Highly Pathogenic Avian influenza (H5N8) in Namibia. The disease has been detected in penguins on the Halifax Island near !Naminus (Lüderitz) in the !Karas region on the 2 February 2019. Over 200 penguins have been reported dead so far from an estimated population of about 7000 penguins. No other birds on the Island seem to be affected by this disease at the moment. The dead penguins were burnt and buried on the Island. So far no cases in domestic birds have been detected.

Avian Influenza (H5N8) is an infectious disease of birds caused by type A strains of the influenza virus which occurs worldwide. All birds are thought to be susceptible to infection with Avian Influenza, though some species are more resistant to infection than others. Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza is characterised by the sudden onset, severe illness, and rapid death, with a mortality rate that can approach 100%. Common clinical signs include swelling and purple discolouration of the head, comb and wattle, swelling and red discolouration of the feet, bleeding of internal organs and muscles, greenish diarrhoea, twisting of the neck, staggering movement and paralysis of wings and legs.

Wild birds play a major role in the maintenance and spread of Avian Influenza viruses. Infected birds/poultry can shed avian influenza A viruses in their saliva, nasal secretions, and feces. Susceptible birds become infected when they have contact with the virus as it is shed by infected birds. Domesticated birds (chickens, turkeys, etc.) may become infected through direct contact with infected wild birds, other infected poultry, or through contact with surfaces that have been contaminated with the viruses.

Although Avian Influenza (H5N8) subtype is not known to infect humans, other strains like the H5N1, H7N9 may be transmitted to humans. Humans can be infected with the virus via the eyes, nose and mouth when handling and coming into close contact with infected poultry/birds, and/or through the handling and consumption of their infected products.

PREVENTION AND BIOSECURITY MEASURES

Because of the stability of the virus in the environment and its highly contagious nature, strict biosecurity measures and good hygiene are essential in preventing Avian Influenza outbreaks.

- Farmers and the General public should immediately report any suspicion of Avian Influenza in domestic or wild birds the nearest State Veterinary Office
- Keep poultry away from areas frequented by wild birds;
- Do not keep on the premises elements that may attract wild birds, including poultry feed products placed outside the building;
- Maintain strict control over access to flocks by vehicles, people and equipment;
- Ensure the sanitation of property, poultry houses and equipment;
- Avoid the introduction of birds of unknown disease status into the flock;
- Ensure appropriate disposal of manure, litter and dead poultry;
- Vaccination and treatment of sick birds against Avian Influenza is prohibited in Namibia

MAWF would like to once again thank farmers and the general public for their usual cooperation and assistance in fighting disease outbreaks.

For more information please contact Dr. J. Shoopala, Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer on Tel no: (061) 2087306 or Dr. C. Grobler and Dr. A Louwrens, State Veterinarians, Keetmanshoop on Tel no.: (063) 223003 /223635.


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