

Brussels, 20. 01. 2006
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Dear Ms Lucas,

Thank you for your letter of 23 January 2006 concerning the killing methods used for poultry in Turkey to eradicate the avian influenza epidemic.

The European Commission shares your view that animals should be killed with humane methods, including for disease control purposes. The practices described in your letter to kill birds would not be compatible with the EU legislation presently in force. However the Commission has no legal competence to intervene in third countries.

As Turkey is a candidate for accession to the EU, the Commission has established a programme with that country in order to ensure that it will progressively implement all applicable EU rules (*the acquis communautaire*). I can assure you that the Commission will be particularly vigilant, during the accession process, in order to ensure that all EU animal welfare rules, including the ones related to killing, will be properly transposed and implemented in a timely manner.

I recently met my Turkish counterpart and raised the issue of killing methods for poultry during the avian influenza outbreaks. The Turkish Minister himself was appalled by the images on television of poultry burned or buried alive and declared that these were isolated cases not representing the usual eradication procedure in Turkey. He reassured me that Turkish authorities care about the animal welfare aspects of culling and cullers are properly trained in this respect.


In the meantime, the Commission studies the possibility for a specific collaboration on the killing of poultry for disease control purposes with the accession countries affected by the avian influenza. For Turkey, it is foreseen to provide EU assistance as regards training and consultancy. This assistance is a component of a global project to help Turkey to control and eradicate avian influenza. However, it should be kept in mind that material assistance and training required for this collaboration would also need the contribution from the EU Member

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Ms Caroline Lucas, MEP
European Parliament
Rue Wiertz
1047 Brussels

States. Due to the restrictions as laid down in the financial regulations, no assistance can be given with regard to compensation to bird owners in Turkey.

The Commission is very much concerned about the welfare of animals as a whole and has recently adopted an animal welfare action plan¹. I am convinced that the European Parliament will provide essential contributions in this debate and I am looking forward to hearing from you and your colleagues on this important paper for the welfare of animals in the EU.

Best regards


¹ See documents COM(2006)13 and COM(2006)14