

E-0464/06EN

E-0596/06EN

Answer given by Mr. Kyprianou

on behalf of the Commission

(28.3.2006)

The Commission underlines that the rules laid down in Commission Decision 2000/666/EC¹ on import of birds other than poultry via quarantine facilities have been established on the assumption that the risk of introduction of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) was very low. However, the recent increasing evidence that wild birds could play a major role in the spread of HPAI, and the first case of the Asian strain of HPAI reported in the EU in a quarantine station in October 2005 have led the Commission to temporarily suspend the imports of all birds other than poultry, including pet birds.

This suspension has been prolonged again until 31 May 2006 on account of the fact that little or no information is available on monitoring for avian influenza in other third countries. The Commission is keeping the issue under review in the light of the increasing knowledge and experience that is being gained and will adapt the import rules accordingly. The Commission has not considered making permanent the temporary ban on the imports of captive birds, at this stage.

Apart from the rules established under the veterinary regime, the implementation of the EU wildlife trade Regulations² is also under constant review by the Scientific Review Group. This group deliberates on “so-called” non-detriment (for species conservation) findings for any imports of birds and other Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) listed species. As a result of such reviews import suspensions are in place for several species from a range of countries. The Commission has furthermore launched a study on the general effectiveness of the EU wildlife Trade Regulations in relation to the objective of CITES to ensure that trade in species of wild fauna and flora does not threaten their survival.

As for the animal health policy relating to imports of birds other than poultry, the Commission has asked the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) to deliver an opinion on the matters relating to these imports. The EFSA has the intention to deliver this opinion by October 2006. Depending on the outcome of the discussions, an evaluation of the animal health measures relating to the import of birds other than poultry may be undertaken.

¹ Commission Decision 2000/666/EC of 16 October 2000 laying down the animal health requirements and the veterinary certification for the import of birds, other than poultry and the conditions for quarantine, OJ L 278, 31.10.2000.

² Council Regulation (EC) No 338/97 of 9 December 1996 on the protection of species of wild fauna and flora by regulating trade therein, OJ L 61, 3.3.1997, and Commission Regulation (EC) No 1808/2001 of 30 August 2001 laying down detailed rules concerning the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 338/97 on the protection of species of wild fauna and flora by regulating trade therein, OJ L 250, 19.9.2001.