



International Poultry Council
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IPC Says Governments Should Exempt Breeding Stock from Influenza Bans

The International Poultry Council called on its members this week to work with their respective governments to ensure that ongoing influenza-related trade bans do not disrupt the distribution of vital poultry breeding stock.

Recent findings of highly pathogenic H5N8 influenza in poultry flocks in the Netherlands, Germany and the U.K. have caused several governments around the world to suspend trade of poultry with the three countries, including hatching eggs and day-old chicks.

In an open letter to members, IPC President Jim Sumner urged members to remain vigilant to prevent the further spread of influenza. He said that the organization's "most immediate concern is the disruption to trade in poultry breeding stock that these detections in Europe are causing. Our modern poultry industry relies on a continued supply of breeding stock to ensure food production."

Members have raised concerns that influenza bans that restrict the import and transit of breeding stock along with poultry meat could quickly develop into shortages of available birds to replenish production flocks.

"Only three primary breeding companies account for more than 95 percent of the breeding stock for meat-type chickens," Sumner wrote. "And much of that production is concentrated in the Netherlands. It is a similar situation for the other main poultry species. Disruptions in the supply of breeding stock can seriously affect everyone's domestic food production for months or even years."

The letter calls on IPC members to ensure that relevant officials in their respective countries are aware that comprehensive trade and transit poultry bans that include breeding stock could have

dramatic unintended consequences on their own domestic poultry production. This could quickly become a serious problem for producers in Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

Sumner pointed out that primary breeding companies produce hatching eggs and chicks in strictly controlled, bio-secure facilities, and that they are shipped to international buyers by air freight.

“Some importing countries have needlessly banned transit of all poultry, including breeding stock, through affected countries, without considering the real level of risk,” he wrote. “Breeding stock is shipped by air, and the transiting chicks are confined to airport grounds for only a few hours before an onward flight. Since the chicks or hatching eggs in transport are housed in special containers that require no additional handling, contact with the outdoor environment is non-existent. This mode of transshipment poses negligible risk for spreading diseases such as influenza.”

The letter also calls on IPC members to urge their respective governments to consider adopting the concept of regionalization, particularly for trade in breeding stock from countries with influenza.

“I am urging you to take up the points in this letter with your national authorities in the interest of your domestic industry and in the interest of the international poultry sector’s major contribution to global food security,” Sumner wrote.