

Animal Health Network - Subgroup on Avian Influenza (AI) 6th meeting



1 October 2026 14:00-18:00
2 October 2026 - 09:00-13:00
Minutes agreed on XX Month202X

Location: EFSA - Parma (Meeting Room M05-M06-M04)/Webconference

Attendees:

- Network Participants:

Country	Member State Organisation
Austria	• Austrian Agency for Health and Food Safety • AGES IVET Mödling
Belgium	• Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain
Bulgaria	• National Diagnostic and Research Veterinary Medical Institute
Croatia	• Veterinary and Food Safety Directorate General
Czech Republic	• State Veterinary Administration
Denmark	• Danish Veterinary and Food Administration
Estonia	• Agriculture and Food Board • National Centre for Laboratory Research and Risk Assessment
Finland	• Finnish Food Authority
France	• ANSES
Greece	• Ministry of Rural Development and Food
Hungary	• National Food Chain Safety Office
Iceland	• Icelandic Food and Veterinary Authority
Italy	• Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale delle Venezie
Latvia	• Food and Veterinary Service
Lithuania	• State Food and Veterinary Service
Luxembourg	• Luxembourg Veterinary and Food Administration
Malta	• Food Safety and Security Authority
Poland	• Państwowy Instytut Weterynaryjny – PIB (National Veterinary Research Institute)
Portugal	• Direção-Geral de Alimentação e Veterinária
Romania	• National Sanitary Veterinary and Food Safety Authority
Slovak Republic	• State Veterinary and Food Administration of the Slovak Republic
Sweden	• Swedish Veterinary Agency



- Observers:
(Kosovo*)Food and Veterinary Agency; (North Macedonia) Food and Veterinary Agency; (Switzerland) Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office
(Turkey) Director General of Livestock
- Hearing Experts:
 - Roxani Giamini
- EFSA:
 - BIOHAW Unit: Francesca Baldinelli, Lisa Kohnle
 - iDATA Unit: Luca Belmonte, Catalin Iancu, Vaia Mitoula



16. Welcome and explanation of objective of the session

17. Icebreaker

18. The new Data Collection Approach (2028) – Highlights

Unified Data Collection Governance: EFSA explained that the One Health Surveillance and Avian Influenza subgroups will remain separate scientific groups, while the data submission and validation arrangements will be unified for the common collection. Subgroup members will nominate the relevant provider and validator organisations and persons by the end of June 2027. Countries may appoint several providers and validators, including backups, and should preferably assign technically skilled staff as data providers while ensuring close collaboration with subject-matter experts and validators.

Common Data Model Changes: EFSA presented the main additions to the integrated model: an epidemiological event identifier for influenza A investigations; pathogenicity reported as an attribute of the influenza A result rather than as a separate parameter; a test identifier to distinguish the number of tests from the number of results; four matrix categories; and surveillance-component identifiers for Union avian influenza surveillance data. Participants requested clear definitions and practical examples, notably for epidemiological events, pooled samples and testing pipelines; EFSA confirmed that further examples and interpretation rules will be included in the guidance.

Implementation, Consultation and Training: EFSA is merging the business rules and catalogues of the two existing collections and invited countries to report missing species, matrices, methods or other catalogue needs by the end of November 2026. The draft data model, catalogues and business rules will then be shared for consultation, giving countries approximately one year to assess national-system impacts. User nominations and dedicated training for providers and validators are planned for the second quarter of 2027, followed by an in-house test with existing data and a DCF2 testing period before launch in January 2028.

2028 DCF2 Collection Process: EFSA described the workflow planned for DCF2. The collection is expected to open in mid-January 2028 and run until the end of March. Providers will prepare, import and transmit data, which will undergo system validation and enrichment; validators will be able to inspect submitted data immediately through Power BI dashboards. Valid data will then move through release, scientific feedback and final acceptance. Data not released earlier by validators will be released automatically at the 31 March deadline; following scientific review and any necessary corrections, accepted data will become available for official EFSA reporting.

Data Submission Tools and Formats: EFSA confirmed that XML submission will remain possible, while DCF2 will accept a broader range of file formats than the current platform. EFSA also introduced a dedicated preparation or “playground” environment in which providers will be able to organise and test their data before formal transmission. Once data are drafted in DCF2, providers and validators will have access to self-service Power BI dashboards to review results and support correction, validation and national reporting.

Long-Term Data Collection Strategy: In response to concerns about the investment required for a two-year funding cycle, EFSA explained that the common collection is being designed to separate stable scientific data needs from legal and financial frameworks that may change more frequently. The aim is to create a reusable structure capable of accommodating different pathogens, target animals and surveillance purposes, while adapting outputs and aggregations to future regulatory or funding requirements without repeatedly redesigning the underlying collection.

19. Mapping One Health and AI surveillance systems



Participants worked individually and in groups to define surveillance contexts and variables, draw causal loop diagrams, and merge separate One Health and Avian Influenza maps into integrated representations

20. One Health and AI surveillance systems analysis

The first exercises asked participants to describe the purpose, tangible and intangible components, and wider system context of their surveillance work. They then selected important variables, expressed as neutral quantifiable nouns such as the number of animals or the level of legal implementation, and narrowed them to five key variables.

Participants were taught to use arrows to show causal direction and S or O markers to indicate relationships. Reinforcing loops can produce exponential growth or decline, while balancing loops move a system towards equilibrium; nested loops can show different short- and long-term effects and delays.

Six groups of five were formed for One Health surveillance and four groups of five for Avian Influenza surveillance. Each group created a causal loop diagram representing its surveillance system and operating context using post-its and flip charts or large paper.

21. reflection on the systems analysis & next steps

After the group work, the separate maps were to be merged into one One Health map and one Avian Influenza map, with participants clustering duplicate concepts such as funding, financing and funders. The final activity was designed to identify commonalities, differences, synergies, unknowns and opportunities for integration.



1. Welcome back and Apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed participants back, acknowledged those joining remotely and apologised for the absence of colleagues who could not attend. The objectives and sequence of the morning session were briefly recalled.

2. Highlights on the Annual Surveillance report on Avian Influenza (2025 data)

EFSA presented the completed validation of the 2025 avian influenza surveillance data and the forthcoming annual report, expected to be published in November. The additional country-specific validation tables helped identify inconsistencies not readily visible in MicroStrategy, particularly for pathogenicity, purpose of raising, follow-up testing, ADIS alignment and mammal data. Participants considered the tables useful and supported retaining an overview-level validation alongside detailed record checks, with further refinement of aggregations for future Power BI dashboards.

3. Highlights on the SENTINEL Wild Birds project – Outcomes from the 2025-2026 sampling period

EFSA presented results from the 2025–2026 SENTINEL Wild Birds sampling period, covering nine surveillance nodes and almost 19,000 samples from more than 11,000 apparently healthy birds. The project detected avian influenza virus in 9.4% of sampled birds and 93 HPAI-positive samples from 89 birds, highlighting the early-warning value of active surveillance, particularly in mallards and Eurasian teals. Discussion addressed seasonal and geographic variation, environmental sampling, genomic sequencing, the possible spring peak, and the importance of maintaining broad geographic and taxonomic coverage. Participants emphasised the project's value in detecting infection in apparently healthy birds, generating genomic intelligence and identifying emerging genotypes along migratory flyways. As EFSA funding may not continue, countries were invited to consider how the established network and sampling capacity could be sustained or complemented through national and collaborative initiatives.

4. Update on the Bird Flu Radar project

EFSA presented the Bird Flu Radar as a public, real-time early-warning tool providing weekly estimates of HPAI introduction risk in wild birds, including forecasts up to four weeks ahead and personalised alerts. Planned developments include updated wild-bird abundance and movement data, broader species coverage and expansion of the poultry-risk prototype beyond France and Italy. EFSA stressed that model performance depends on timely ADIS notifications and complete, harmonised poultry population data, particularly establishment location, density, bird numbers and outdoor access. EFSA also reminded countries that submitting animal population data through the SIGMA Animal Population data model removes the need to submit the same information again in aggregated form through the Zoonoses data collection.

5. The Avian Influenza Data Collection in 2027 (2026 data)

EFSA reviewed feedback on the current collection and clarified the reporting of pooled samples, laboratory fields, follow-up tests, purpose of raising and poultry population data. The 2026 data collection will open on 4 January 2027 and close on 12 March, followed by validation, correction and acceptance by the end of May; countries completing submission early may receive earlier scientific validation. DCF will remain the submission entry point, with SIGMA EST continuing as the mapping tool for generating XML files, while guidance, business rules, dashboards and error messages will be improved.

6. Discussion

Participants discussed how future surveillance could better integrate national initiatives and data sources. Priorities included understanding changes in wild-bird migration routes,



sustaining cross-border active surveillance and genomic intelligence, linking mammal findings with wild-bird events, and strengthening exchange through the subgroup's Teams channel. EFSA invited countries to identify the activities and tools offering the greatest added value, particularly in view of future budget constraints.

7. Avian Influenza in Mammals – The Swedish experience + Discussion

Sweden described the progressive expansion of HPAI surveillance in wild and domestic mammals, based mainly on public reporting of sick or dead wildlife, targeted testing and bulk-milk screening. Testing animals without typical signs identified infections that suspicion-based sampling alone would have missed, while serological findings remained difficult to interpret and confirm. Participants compared national approaches following poultry or wild-bird outbreaks—including PCR, serology, milk and saliva sampling—and highlighted the value of combining mammal surveillance with rabies programmes and linking detections to wild-bird epidemiology and genomic data.

8. Feedback and Discussion on the new Data Collection in 2028

Participants discussed the timetable for the integrated 2028 collection and the interaction between EFSA and HADEA reporting deadlines. EFSA clarified that data will be available for validation and self-service reporting immediately after submission, allowing countries to download tables for national reports before final acceptance. Concerns were raised about the shorter HADEA deadlines, particularly at the end of the grant period; EFSA confirmed that these deadlines are not set by EFSA and invited continued feedback to make the new process as workable as possible.

9. AOB

ECDC asked how widely citizen reporting is used to support surveillance of sick or dead wild birds and whether public-health guidance on safe handling and personal protective measures is provided. Participants described national apps, hotlines and web-reporting systems through which citizens can submit locations, coordinates and, in some cases, photographs. Most countries advise the public not to touch carcasses; trained veterinary, environmental or wildlife personnel assess reports and collect suitable birds, although some countries provide practical hygiene and protective guidance where members of the public assist. The discussion confirmed that citizen-generated information can substantially increase notifications and is used for laboratory testing, epidemiological and geospatial analysis, rapid risk assessment, preparedness and communication.

Agreed actions and follow-up

Actions for EFSA

- Circulate the final 2025 avian influenza surveillance report for country review and comments.
- Use country feedback on validation tables and preferred aggregations to inform the future Power BI validation dashboard.
- Publish the updated guidance for the 2026 data collection, including clearer examples for pooled samples and HPAI reporting.
- Revitalise the subgroup's Teams channel to facilitate exchange of national surveillance activities, methods and findings.

Actions for countries

- Review the final 2025 surveillance report after circulation and provide EFSA with comments.
- Provide feedback on validation tables, preferred data aggregations and the activities or tools offering greatest added value.



- Contact the Bird Flu Radar technical support mailbox if weekly alerts are not received after retrying the subscription.
- Submit poultry population data where available, including accurate outdoor-access information and consistent establishment identifiers across population and laboratory datasets.
- Submit 2026 avian influenza surveillance data within the published timetable and complete correction and acceptance steps.
- **Review** the forthcoming 2028 animal health data model and catalogues and comment on data elements, mandatory or optional status and catalogue values.
- Share experience on mammal surveillance and serology, links with wild-bird events, citizen-reporting systems and associated public guidance through the subgroup's Teams channel.