

Increased protection for Swedish poultry and other birds in captivity

For poultry and other birds in captivity, the Board of Agriculture has decided to increase the level of protection against bird flu, from level 1 (lower risk) to level 2 (moderate risk). This decision applies to all holdings south of the river Dalälven from 7 March. However, animal owners are encouraged to apply the increased level of protection from 1 March.

– We increase the level of protection now as a matter of precaution, says Ms Karin Åhl, deputy head of the Department for Animal Production. This is a good time to take further preventive measures regarding poultry and other birds in captivity, even though we see no increased bird flu risk in Sweden at the moment.

The increased level of protection means that poultry shall be kept indoors, as well as a ban on exhibitions, competitions and similar activities involving poultry and other birds in captivity. However, ducks, geese, ratites, farmed game birds and hobby flocks may still be kept outdoors, but behind fences. Birds kept outdoors must be fed and watered under a roof (this applies also at level 1). Level 2 applies from 7 March in all of Sweden south of the river Dalälven. North of the river, level 1 applies.

The reason for this precautionary increase in the level of protection is the cases of bird flu that have been detected in domestic poultry holdings in i.a. the United Kingdom and Hungary. However, there are no reports on increased mortality among wild birds in Sweden, and the birds that have been tested so far in 2007 were all negative for the flu virus H5N1, both in Sweden and in the rest of Europe.

- Birds start to migrate in March, and we do not know enough about the parts played by various migratory species in the spreading of bird flu, says Ms Marianne Elvander, state epizootiologist at the National Veterinary Institute. This is reason enough to increase the level of biosecurity as a precautionary measure for poultry and other birds in captivity in Sweden south of the river Dalälven.

Southern Sweden will remain at level 2 until the end of May, but the rules may be in force both for a longer or a shorter time, depending on the risk of contamination. If bird flu were to be detected in Sweden or in a neighbouring country, the level of protection may be increased.

More detailed information (in Swedish) is available at

<http://www.sjv.se/download/18.d1afd31104979e5ae80003820/2007-017.pdf>

Contacts:

Ms. Christina Thörn, Animal Disease Control Division, phone 070-556 21 82

Ms. Marianne Elvander, National Veterinary Institute, phone 018-67 41 46