Date 20 November 2014
Subject Avian influenza outbreak in Ter Aar

Dear Madam President,

On 20 November 2014 an outbreak of the H5 strain of avian influenza was detected at a poultry farm in Ter Aar (municipality of Nieuwkoop). The H5 strain of the avian influenza virus is a highly infectious notifiable disease under European regulations.

This letter is to inform you about this infection and the measures I have taken.

**Monitoring and early warning**

The Netherlands has an early warning system in place whereby veterinarians submit samples for testing when certain symptoms of disease symptoms appear which could indicate the presence of avian influenza. Avian influenza is notifiable when the presence of the disease is suspected but has not yet been confirmed.

On Wednesday 19 November samples taken from a poultry farm in Ter Aar (municipality of Nieuwkoop) were submitted for testing because the hens were exhibiting signs of disease which was suspected to possibly be avian influenza. Laboratory tests carried out this morning, 20 November 2014, have confirmed that the infection at this farm is the H5 strain of avian influenza.

It is not yet clear if the H5 strain of avian influenza that has been detected is the highly pathogenic or low pathogenic form of the virus. This should be determined by further analysis by the Central Veterinary Institute. It is expected that the results of this analysis will be released by the end of the day tomorrow.

**Measures**

The affected holding is an egg farm with units containing a total of 43,000 laying hens. Dead birds were observed in one unit. Clearance of the farm began today, Thursday 20 November. The birds will be culled at the farm and removed for destruction.
The farm is being cleared by personnel from the Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (NVWA). Protective measures are being taken to prevent those involved in clearing the affected farm from becoming infected.

Due to the recent outbreak of highly pathogenic bird flu in Hekendorp, the Netherlands, immediate steps have been taken to prevent the further spread of the disease. As a precautionary measure, a total transport ban is in effect for all poultry and other fowl, eggs, poultry manure, and litter to and from poultry farms and slaughterhouses. This transport ban also extends to farms which keep poultry as well as other animals. The ban also prohibits transporting manure from these other animals. The ban will remain in effect for up to 72 hours.

The order requiring amateur holders to house all poultry and other birds indoors and isolated has been reinstated, and will remain in effect for up to 72 hours. For commercial holders, a similar order was already in place until 18 December 2014. I informed you about this in my letter of 19 November 2014.

Visitors to any farms with poultry will be subject to controls for this entire period. A nationwide hunting ban is also in effect for all animals, as is a ban on exhibitions and gatherings of poultry and other fowl.

European regulations prescribe that a 3km protection zone and a 10km surveillance zone must be instated. The 10km zone contains 4 other poultry farms. Samples will be taken from these farms and tested for avian influenza. Contacts with the affected farm are also being investigated.

I will of course keep you informed of developments.

(p.p.) Sharon A.M. Dijksma
Minister for Agriculture