

WOAH's Animal Health Forum reshapes avian influenza prevention and control strategies

09 June 2023 | News

International experts, private sector and government representatives to discuss current challenges and perspectives for combatting avian influenza



International experts, private sector and government representatives to discuss current challenges and perspectives for combatting avian influenza

The recent paradigm change in the ecology and epidemiology of avian influenza has heightened global concern as the disease has spread to new geographical regions, has caused unusual wild bird die-offs, and has led to an alarming rise in mammalian cases. The rapidly evolving nature and the changes in spread patterns have encouraged leaders and experts to review existing avian influenza prevention and control tools, including the use of vaccines.

The [Animal Health Forum](#) held during WOA's recent 90th General Session convened key stakeholders and the full membership of the Organisation to discuss how to minimise the impacts of avian influenza across sectors. Based on the Technical Item [Strategic Challenges in the Global Control of High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza](#) presented at the event, participants discussed the impact of the disease, the fitness for purpose of existing prevention and control tools, international trade impact, and the necessity to enhance global coordination. Following the Forum, WOA issued a [comprehensive report](#) capturing the discussions and outcomes.

WOA's General Assembly debated the use of vaccination as a complementary tool and extensively discussed its associated implementation challenges. It was recognised that a successful vaccination strategy must rely on authorised vaccines that closely match the virus strains in circulation. Furthermore, it must be accompanied by robust disease surveillance, which is able to demonstrate freedom from infection in the domestic animal population as recommended by

WOAH's [Terrestrial Animal Health Code](#). By considering all existing science-based control measures and using them in line with international recommendations, countries can develop their own national strategies tailored to their local context and ensure their effectiveness.

WOAH Members adopted a [Resolution](#) which will serve as a basis for shaping future avian influenza control activities, while protecting wildlife, supporting the poultry industry and the continuity of trade. The Resolution notably underscores the importance of Members respecting and implementing WOAH international standards to effectively combat avian influenza. Recognising the compliant use of vaccination without negative consequences on trade as per WOAH standards further stresses the need for robust vaccination monitoring and disease surveillance systems.