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Korea fights to contain the spread of Avian Influenza

Report Categories:

Livestock and Products

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Report Highlights:

The Korean government is responding to several recent cases of HPAI in duck and chicken populations in order to contain the spread of the disease. The government continues to fumigate farms, vehicles and livestock related facilities to control the spread of the disease. In addition to the fumigation and culling of birds in infected farms, the Korean government will impose a “standstill” order on the movement of poultry products for 36 hours. The bulk of the infection was found in duck farms. The market for duck meat has not been impacted by these efforts as the overall drop in consumption has not recovered since shrinking over 30-40 percent following the outbreak in July 27, 2014. The chicken market has also not been impacted as there was already an oversupply of chicken and the number of chickens culled is minimal.

General Information:

The Korean government has been fighting to contain the spread of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) with outbreaks continuing since September 24, 2014. The government has been fumigating poultry farms, vehicles and livestock related facilities to control the spread of the disease. In addition to fumigation and culling of the birds in the infected farms, the Korean government will impose a “standstill” order on the movement of poultry products for 36 hours from 6 am on January 17 to 6 pm on January 18, 2015. The standstill order was issued after consulting with poultry farmers and agricultural cooperatives and after the farmers were given time to stock up on feed. During the 36-hour period, birds, farms and all of the vehicles that have been used will be decontaminated thoroughly. According to a report, a total of 106,000 people will be affected along with 31,000 facilities. Failure to follow the order can result in a maximum fine of 10 million won or a prison term of up to one year. The standstill will also affect cars that move cloven-hoofed animals to help stem the spread of foot-and-mouth disease.

Although there were a higher number of cases reported between January 16 and July 27, 2014, Korea did not have any HPAI outbreaks for 2 months until it began again on September 24, 2014. A total of 548 farms were infected during the period between January 16 and July 27, 2014 and a total of 13,961,000 chickens were culled. Since September 24, 2014, a total of 49 farms have been infected with HPAI and 589,000 chickens have been culled up to now. Although, a breakdown of chicken and duck farms is not available, the bulk of culled birds were ducks. The reason for a smaller number of culled animals since September 2014 compared to the period from January – July 2014 is due to the change in the Korean government policy for culling the birds in the infected area. Prior to August 14, 2014, the Korean government was much more aggressive in not only culling all of the birds in the infected farm but also those birds within a radius of 500 meters from the infected farm. The Korean government also culled birds in some of the high risk farms within a radius of 3 km before the policy change took place. However, since August 14, 2014, the Korean government has decided to be more flexible. Korea is now only culling the birds in infected farms and high risk farms while sending birds from other farms within a radius of 500 meters to the slaughter plant. This policy change has reduced the total number of birds being culled.

The total inventory of ducks dropped from 10.9 million in December 2013 to 6.1 million in June 2014 but has since increased to 7.5 million as of December 1, 2014. With duck consumption having dropped by over 30 percent, a population of 7.5 million is sufficient to meet the reduced demand for duck.

Post will continue to monitor the situation and provide an updated report if the HPAI situation worsens and expands.