



9th April, 2013

Your Ref: CB2/PL/FE
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Hon. Alan Leong Kah-kit
Chairman
Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene
Legislative Council
Hong Kong

Dear Chairman

Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene
Meeting on 16 April 2013
Agenda item V – Avian influenza prevention measures

The SPCA has been asked to present views on avian influenza prevention measures.

We have taken this opportunity to give a brief written submission on areas we believe are of continued concern and Dr. Fiona Woodhouse will attend the meeting on the 16th of April to address the panel.

We note that although mechanisms such as increased bio-security, vaccination and surveillance programmes and improved market management can all play a role in managing and reducing the risks of avian influenza there inherently remains an increased risk of disease spread (both enzootic and zoonotic) with regards to current practices within Hong Kong involving birds used for trade (both as food and pets). This risk is not limited to HPAI H5N1 alone

Some areas for concern are listed below:

- Vaccination and surveillance programmes are usually targeted towards known problematic pathogens such as HPAI H5N1 and as such are less effective against novel or emerging pathogenic agents.
- Contact between human and live animals increases the risk of transmission of some zoonotic diseases.
- Multiple sources of birds and large numbers of birds being held / raised together may increase the risk of a breakdown in bio-security and a disease event occurring.



As such whilst the current approach in Hong Kong is reasonably robust in terms of HPAI in the present context the situation in could be improved in terms of risk management by introduction of the following measures:

- The banning of the sale of live birds for food in wet markets.
- The banning of the import of live birds for the food trade.
- Improved control and management of the pet bird trade.

It is also to be noted that not only would the above measure improve veterinary public health in terms of reduced risk of disease transmission but should also overall improve bird welfare as the birds would not be transported over long periods from outside of Hong Kong nor would they have to be held in wet markets for an additional period prior to slaughter.

It also remains important for the Agricultural, Fisheries and Conservation Department to follow international best practices in terms of humane killing for disease control where culling of birds (either healthy or sick) maybe part of a disease prevention or control strategy for Hong Kong. Personnel who undertake such humane killing should be properly equipped and trained in order to minimise the negative impact on the welfare of the birds prior to their being killed.

Yours sincerely



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