

Preface

Recently, highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) has experienced a spectacular expansion in numerous countries.

Originating in Southeast Asia, it has arrived in Africa after crossing several European countries.



Its economic consequences, already serious in developed countries, are dramatic for developing ones.

They are amplified by poor knowledge about the disease, particularly a lack of reliable consumer information.

It therefore is important that this educational handbook, which is destined for a wide audience, explains in clear terms, using numerous illustrations, what HPAI really is.

I salute this initiative, and I hope that the greatest number of people in our member countries may have access to it.



A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a long, sweeping line that curves upwards and to the right, followed by a few smaller, less distinct strokes.

Bernard VALLAT
Director general
World Organization for Animal Health (OIE)

Preface

Despite international efforts, avian influenza continues to spread throughout the world: in 2006, several African countries were affected one after another.

The propagation of the virus in Africa, which lies at the heart of our Priority Solidarity Zone (PSZ), requires new means to assist our partner countries in addressing the epizootic. Beyond a moral duty to come to the assistance of the most vulnerable, aiding these countries is in our own interest because avian influenza illustrates the interdependence of the world today: if the virus is not concretely controlled in developing countries, it will continue to propagate beyond administrative borders.



The control of health crises are therefore everyone's business – governments, international organizations, and citizens. It is essential to detect suspect cases as quickly as possible and to take the necessary measures to treat them, but also to avoid risky behavior and disproportionate responses that only amplify health and economic damage. For these reasons, it is important to develop effective and appropriate forms of communication, using clear language, to respond to people's legitimate concerns.

This need for information is particularly strong in the case of avian influenza, an animal disease that has infected livestock on three continents. It must be emphasized that the people infected to date were poultry farmers or members of their families who probably were poorly informed about the disease, the behaviors to avoid, and the precautions to take during their daily contact with poultry.

The educational handbook prepared by CIRAD is an attempt to respond to this need for information. It is addressed to all actors in the field as well as to various opinion relay points in France's Priority Solidarity Zone. It is necessary to consolidate in a practical format the main points of our current understanding of this virus whose animal source must be controlled and the transmission between people monitored. I have no doubt that this document, a veritable vademecum on avian influenza, will contribute to mobilization at the field level, which France encouraged and for which it will continue to resolutely act.



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Brigitte Girardin'.

Brigitte GIRARDIN
Minister delegate for Cooperation,
Development and the French Speaking World