

## The point of view of poultry farmers

### Commercial farmers

A HPAI epizootic is a catastrophe impossible to hide. It causes sudden and massive mortality among chickens that are raised intensively. In countries equipped with a well developed veterinary infrastructure, commercial poultry farmers have no choice but to actively cooperate with the veterinary services by declaring a suspect case, accepting the diagnosis, and following the control measures imposed by the official veterinary services: the culling of chickens that are still alive, the disposal of the carcasses according to strict bio-security standards, the thorough disinfection of the site and material, the quarantine of the farm, the provision of compensation, and the strict surveillance of movement and of other birds in a several kilometer radius from the outbreak. The greatest amount of transparency on the part of health authorities is obviously indispensable for the proper management of this type of crisis.



*Backyard ducks in Niger, 2006 – Alexandre Caron, © Cirad*

### Small farmers

An outbreak of HPAI on a small farm is a catastrophe because the farmer knows that all of his animals will either die or be culled while the compensation measures in many developing countries are very uncertain. Consequently, there is a strong temptation to kill a sick animal at the first sign of disease to eat, sell, or – if it already is dead - discretely get rid of the body. Without specific information and sensitization, a farmer will say nothing to neighbors or the authorities. This attitude is understandable when the authorities in a country, although alerted to the risk, do not diffuse information for fear of a negative impact on exports, commerce, tourism, and more generally the overall reputation of the country.

### **The transmission risk**

HPAI virus transmission through the digestive system has not been noted in humans. The main mode of human contamination is through ocular or respiratory routes. It is therefore necessary to wear protective masks and glasses (in addition to gloves and overalls) when manipulating sick or suspect birds. The risk linked to the consumption of infected poultry is indirect: via the fingers while touching the bird before cooking, then through contact of the hand with the eyes or nose. Swallowing eggs is to be avoided because the virus may be on the shells of eggs laid by a hen in the very first stage of the disease (the hen later will cease to lay eggs). Consequently, hand washing before and after touching food is a simple and efficient preventive measure to be taken without exception.



*Industrial battery of laying hens in Cambodia, 2002 – Vincent Porphyre, © Cirad*

### **Frozen chicken, cooked chicken**

The consumption of poultry or poultry products (eggs, meat, foie gras...) presents no danger when veterinary control measures are implemented correctly. Products are only made available for consumption several days after poultry are slaughtered, which provides time for a potential infectious outbreak to manifest itself on the source farm.

In case of doubt regarding the efficiency of the control measures, well cooked meat (having a core temperature of 70°C for at least one second, in other words, meat without the slightest trace of pink, including near the bones), presents no risk. A cooked egg also presents no risk. However, freezing does not destroy the virus; it conserves it.