



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

Directorate G – Crisis preparedness in food, animals and plants
Unit G2 - Animal Health
Head of Unit

Brussels
SANTE/G2/SM/tcn (2026)7715093

Dear Dr. Westendorp,

Thank you for your participation in the High-Level Conference on *Animal Health Law – 10 Years of Achievement*, held in Brussels on 8 July 2026, and for your letter to Ms Claire Bury, Deputy Director-General, Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE).

Indeed, DG SANTE values its dialogue with hobbyist and bird-breeder organisations. As reflected in your letter, the recent evaluation of the Animal Health Law indicates that small-scale farmers and hobby animal keepers may perceive the requirements laid down in the legislation as burdensome and disproportionate to the scale of their activities.

The Animal Health Law intends to prevent and control transmissible animal diseases, strengthening EU-wide health and safety standards while supporting sustainability, competitiveness, and growth in livestock ensuring an appropriate balance between the costs and benefits associated with legal obligations, including their impact on small-scale keepers. The priority is safeguarding the core aims of the Animal Health Law laid down in its Article 1(2), that is the management of actual animal and public health risks.

Accordingly, the interests of hobby bird keepers have already been reflected in the current EU framework as much as possible, including through recent amendments to the rules in Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/688 on the movement of birds between Member States that were mentioned in your letter.

For certain movements near borders for specific purposes, you may also be aware that neighbouring Member States have the possibility to regulate those among themselves, in accordance with Article 139 of the Animal Health Law. We are aware of at least one such agreement in the Netherlands (with Belgium and Luxembourg) covering captive birds.

In addition, Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/687 provides for risk-based derogations from certain measures following outbreaks of category A diseases. Subject to specific conditions and prior risk assessment, competent authorities may grant such derogations, including for establishments keeping up to 50 captive birds or animals registered in advance as rare breeds or as having duly justified high genetic, cultural or educational value. Any derogation must be assessed by the competent authority on a case-by-case basis.

Any further adjustment to the framework would need to be justified by public and animal health risk and scientific evidence, while ensuring effective disease prevention and control across the EU. In view of the evaluation findings and the current animal health situation of poultry and captive birds in the EU, in particular the recurring outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza and the recent increase in outbreaks of Newcastle disease in certain Member States,

additional flexibilities cannot be envisaged at this stage. I regret but prefer to inform you in the spirit of transparency that we do not even see any obvious possibilities we could explore.

The Commission nevertheless remains committed to constructive dialogue with stakeholders and I thank you again for your engagement on this important matter. We have taken due note of your communication and will keep in mind the aspects you have raised for any future work on this area.

Yours sincerely,

[e-signed]

Francisco Reviriego-Gordejo

C.c.: C. Bury, B. Logar, M. Klemm, L. Kuster, S. Mesman (DG SANTE)

