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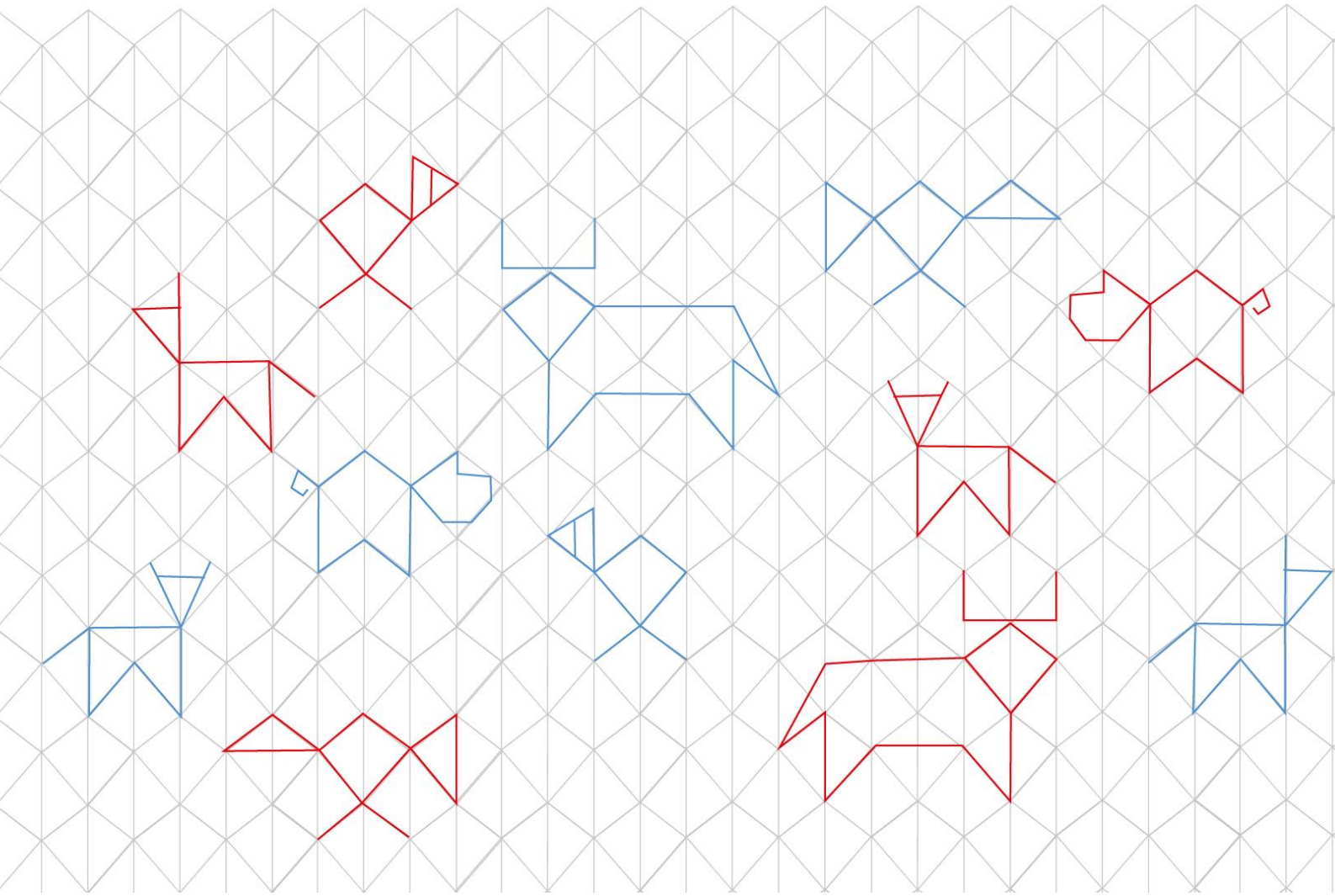


World Organisation
for Animal Health
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Virtual Update Meeting on the Situation of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in the Americas Region.

Report

April 14, 2026



Virtual Update Meeting on the Situation of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in the Americas Region Report

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Abbreviations

ALA: Latin American Poultry Association

CAHFSA: Caribbean Agricultural Health and Food Safety Agency

CVP: Permanent Veterinary Committee

FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

GF-TADs: Global Framework for the Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases

HPAI: High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza

IICA: Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture

LFDA: Federal Agricultural Defense Laboratory

OIRSA: International Regional Organization for Plant and Animal Health

PAHO-PANAFTOSA: Pan American Center for Foot-and-Mouth Disease and Veterinary Public Health

SG-CAN: General Secretariat of the Andean Community

WOAH: World Organisation for Animal Health

Executive Summary

The regional meeting brought together representatives of official veterinary services, the Brazilian reference laboratory (LFDA), international organizations (OIRSA, CAHFSA, CVP, SG-CAN, IICA, PAHO-PANAFTOSA), the private sector (ALA, Chilehuevos), and technical experts from various countries in the Americas, with the objective of updating the epidemiological situation of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), sharing national experiences, lessons learned, and discussing investment priorities to strengthen the regional animal health response.

The session took place within the framework of the GF-TADs coordination mechanisms for the Americas, with an emphasis on surveillance, diagnostics, biosecurity, and regional technical cooperation. It began with an update on the global and regional situation, highlighting that avian influenza remains among the diseases with the highest number of notifications worldwide, with a significant concentration of reports in the Americas. It was emphasized that the disease continues to affect wild birds as well as commercial and backyard poultry, with important health and economic repercussions.

Subsequently, participating countries shared their national experiences. Argentina presented the evolution of its outbreaks since 2023, including the implementation of sanitary control zones, stamping-out measures, active surveillance, and procedures for regaining disease-free status. Chile reported the reintroduction of the virus in 2026, noting that the current clinical presentation differs substantially from that observed in 2023, with lower mortality and less evident clinical signs, which complicates early detection.

The Cayman Islands shared a particularly illustrative experience from a One Health perspective, where coordination among animal health, public health, and environmental sectors enabled a rapid response, immediate depopulation of the affected site, and restoration of disease-free status. For its part, the United States presented a broad overview of the magnitude of the problem, with all 50 states affected, multi-billion-dollar investments in response efforts, and a strategy focused on early detection, biosecurity, and compensation for producers.

The Brazilian reference laboratory provided highly relevant technical insights, particularly regarding the genetic reassortment of the virus and its potential impact on the sensitivity of molecular diagnostic methods. The need to keep PCR protocols updated and to strengthen genomic sequencing as an essential surveillance tool was emphasized.

Key Discussion Points

Situation of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in the Americas

The regional situation of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in the Americas was presented:

- Sustained circulation of the virus in North America since 2017 was observed, with events in both poultry and wild birds.
- The animal health, production, and trade impacts associated with outbreaks in poultry were highlighted.
- The role of wild birds in the transboundary spread of the virus was underlined.
- A regional consolidation of animal health events was presented, enabling the identification of recurrence patterns and higher-risk areas.
- The need for continuous and integrated epidemiological surveillance was emphasized.
- The importance of timely reporting and regional coordination among countries in the Americas was reiterated.

National Response Experiences

Participating countries shared recent outbreak experiences and the strategies implemented for their containment:

- Argentina highlighted the application of sanitary zoning measures, intensified surveillance, and the integration of the private sector in monitoring and control actions.
- Chile reported outbreaks in wild and backyard birds, noting that the current clinical characteristics of the virus complicate early detection through traditional clinical surveillance.
- Cayman Islands presented their experience in rapid intersectoral response under a One Health approach, emphasizing the importance of national coordination for timely control.
- United States shared the implementation of biosecurity audits, compensation to producers, and the assessment of risk factors associated with lateral transmission between farms.

These experiences reflect that response capacity has improved, although challenges related to effective prevention and containment remain.

Epidemiological Surveillance and Diagnosis

One of the main consensuses of the meeting was that traditional surveillance approaches must evolve.

It emphasized that:

- Surveillance based solely on clinical signs is insufficient.
- Risk-based active surveillance must be strengthened, particularly in wild birds.
- Genetic sequencing and molecular monitoring are essential to understand virus dynamics.
- In diagnostics, the strengthening of regional laboratory networks was highlighted, improving detection capacity in most countries.

However, significant challenges were identified:

- The need for constant updating of diagnostic protocols due to viral mutations.
- Requirements for adequate infrastructure and specialized equipment.
- Limitations in advanced technical capacities, especially in bioinformatics.

Biosecurity and Prevention

It was highlighted that strengthening biosecurity should not be limited to infrastructure but must also include changes in operational practices and personnel behavior. Biosecurity was one of the central topics of discussion.

While progress has been made, persistent weaknesses were identified in:

- Mortality management.
- Access and movement control on farms.
- Prevention of contact with wild birds.
- Effective separation of clean and dirty areas.

It was emphasized that lateral transmission between farms is strongly associated with failures in biosecurity, underscoring the need to strengthen not only infrastructure but also practices and staff behavior.

The importance of linking economic incentives (such as compensation) to compliance with sanitary standards was also noted.

Regional Cooperation and Animal Health Governance

The meeting reaffirmed that regional cooperation is an essential component in addressing HPAI.

Positive aspects included:

- Laboratory networks and technical exchange mechanisms.
- Coordination platforms between countries and international organizations.

Nonetheless, there is a need to move towards:

- More in-depth and systematic regional epidemiological analysis.
- More agile information-sharing mechanisms.
- Greater integration of technical capacities among countries.

The importance of maintaining these dialogue and coordination platforms as a strategic investment in animal health was also emphasized.

Gaps and Priority Challenges

Based on the presentations and discussions, the following critical gaps were identified:

- Insufficient capacity in bioinformatics and data analysis.
- Difficulties in translating technical information into inputs for decision-making.
- Limitations in laboratory infrastructure and equipment in some countries.
- The need to strengthen applied epidemiology and joint regional analysis.
- Persistent weaknesses in biosecurity at the production level.

Key Recommendations

Based on the joint analysis, the following recommendations are highlighted:

- Strengthen risk-based active surveillance, integrating wild bird monitoring and molecular tools.
- Increase investment in laboratories, including infrastructure, equipment, and training.
- Develop capacities in bioinformatics and epidemiological analysis to support evidence-based decision-making.
- Reinforce biosecurity on farms, promoting both structural and behavioral changes.
- Strengthen regional cooperation, especially in information sharing and joint analysis.
- Integrate the One Health approach into prevention and response strategies.
- Promote active participation of the private sector in surveillance and control.
- Maintain transparency and timely reporting of animal health events.

Conclusions

The meeting highlighted significant progress in countries' response capacities to avian influenza; however, it also made clear that the current dynamics of the disease pose new challenges that require adjustments to traditional approaches.

HPAI must be addressed as a dynamic and constantly evolving regional animal health risk, requiring:

- More sophisticated surveillance systems,
- Strengthened technical capacities,
- And effective regional coordination.

Technical exchange and cooperation among countries are consolidated as fundamental tools to advance toward more resilient and better-prepared animal health systems in the face of emerging threats.

This document has been produced under the umbrella of



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