

Letter to the editors 

Cross-sectional assessment of compliance with the requirements of the animal disease control act for avian influenza control in Nigeria

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Cross-sectional assessment of compliance with the requirements of the animal disease control act for avian influenza control in Nigeria

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To the editors of the Pan African Medical Journal

The economic burden of an outbreak of avian influenza in the poultry subsector in Nigeria has continued to rise since its emergence between 2006 and 2013. Over 1.2 million poultry chicken was affected in 25 States of Nigeria and USD 1.8 million was paid as compensation to affected farmers [1-4]. From 2015 to 2017, the resurgence of highly pathogenic avian influenza in Nigeria accounted for the loss of over 3.6 million chicken and compensation claims of over USD 7.2 million was paid to affected farmers [5]. As of the first quarter of 2023 outbreak of avian influenza has been reported in 28 States and over 1 million poultry chicken has been affected, with compensation claims put at USD 692 million [6]. The live bird markets may have played a major role in the resurgence of avian influenza in 2015 [4]. At present, three subtypes of avian influenza viruses (AIVs), (three homologous (H5N8, H5N6, H5N1), and one heterologous (H9N2) strain have been isolated in poultry Nigeria [3]. Highly pathogenic avian influenza (H5N1) is responsible for 864 cases of hospitalization and 457 deaths from 2003 to the first quarter of 2023 [7]. Spillover infections with AIVs H5N1 have been reported in seals in Peru, otters and foxes in the United Kingdom [8,9]. This may suggest an increase in virulence of avian influenza H5N1 due to genetic reassortment to adapt and cause infection in animals other than avian species. In order to ease the burden of losses due to the resurgence of highly pathogenic avian influenza on poultry farmers and reduce economic losses in government revenues earmarked as compensation claims [4], an insurance policy was introduced into the comprehensive emergency preparedness and response plan for the control of highly pathogenic avian influenza. At present, Nigeria does not vaccinate poultry chickens against avian influenza, however, stakeholders have pushed for the review of the “no vaccination policy” [6]. Consequently, the Federal Department of Veterinary Services

reviewed the animal disease control law to accommodate the need for insurance by large-scale poultry farms. By this law, poultry farms with over 3,000 poultry birds are mandated to obtain an insurance policy to cushion the effect of losses in an event of an outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza. This was without prejudice to other control policies such as registration of farm units with the Director of Veterinary Services (DVS) of the host state who ensures compliance with biosecurity/biosafety measures on farms, and ensures food safety within its jurisdiction [10]. There is a paucity of information on the level of compliance of poultry farmers with these policies. The purpose of this study was to determine the level of awareness of poultry farmers to the requirement of animal disease control policies for avian influenza control and assess the willingness of farmers to insure their farms against an outbreak of poultry diseases.

Conclusion

The animal disease control policies targeted at reducing the burden of losses to farmers in Nigeria may fall short of their aim due to the paucity of information to the poultry farmers on the need for farming units to insure their practice. Furthermore, these farmers may not report suspected cases of outbreak of avian influenza (AI) due to fears that such uninsured farms with over 3000 poultry may not be compensated for their losses due to the outbreak of diseases (Table 1). Consequently, the Nigeria insurance company and the State Department of Veterinary Services should commence sensitization of farming units on the need to insure the business and provide insurance cover to farmers in the event of an outbreak of AI in Nigeria to prevent the further spread of diseases within the poultry subsector.

Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interests.

Authors' contributions

Dr Okoli Solomon Chieloka wrote this manuscript; Dr Onaga Awele read and edited the manuscript. Both authors read and agreed to the final manuscript.

Table

Table 1: questionnaire accessing awareness of poultry farmers to the requirements of the animal disease control for the control of avian influenza in Nigeria questionnaire accessing awareness of poultry farmers to the requirements of the animal disease control for the control of avian influenza in Nigeria

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Table 1: questionnaire accessing awareness of poultry farmers to the requirements of animal disease control for the control of avian influenza in Nigeria

Parameters	Variables
Demography (n=80)	
Gender	
Male	60(75%)
Female	20(25%)
Type of poultry farming system	
Intensive system	46(57%)
Extensive system	34(43%)
Type of poultry housing	
Deep litter system	55(69%)
Battery cage	25(31.1%)
Respondents are poultry farmers from	32 of 37 States
Mean no of years respondents practiced farming (mean ± SD)	7.5±3.3
Requirements of Animal disease control law 2021 for AI	
Is your poultry farm registered with the DVS (n=80)?	
Yes	40(50%)
No	40(50%)
What is the flock size of your farm	
Less than 3000 birds	55(68.8%)
More than 3000 birds	25(31%)
If you keep less than 3000 birds, is your farm insured? (n=55)	
Yes	35(63%)
No	20(6.3%)
If your response was "no" above state the reasons (n=55)	
I do not understand why my farm should be insured	6.3%
I am a small-scale farmer	20(95%)
If you keep more than 3000 birds, is your farm insured? (n=25)	
Yes	0
No	25(100%)
If your response was "no" above state the reasons (n=25)	
I do not want to insure my farm although I understand why I should	5(20%)
I do not understand why I should insure my farm	10(40%)
High cost of insurance premium	10(40%)
If you suspect an outbreak of avian influenza on your farm, will you report the same to the veterinary authority? (n=80)	
Yes	75(94%)
No	5(6%)
If your response was No above state the reasons? (n=5)	
I keep ≥ 3000 birds and my farm is not insured against losses	5(100%)