

THURSDAY, 12 OCTOBER, 2017

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

ON THE

POULTRY IMPORT BAN ARISING FROM OUTBREAKS OF HIGHLY PATHOGENIC
AVIAN INFLUENZA

BY THE HON. MINISTER OF FISHERIES AND LIVESTOCK, MR KATAMBO

Madam Speaker, thank you for availing me this opportunity to address this august House on the resurgence of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in a number of African countries and the measures that my ministry has instituted so far.

Madam Speaker, I am making this statement as a result of a number of queries received from the business community on the import ban on poultry and poultry products from countries affected by HPAI.

Madam Speaker, in June this year, my ministry banned the importation of poultry and poultry products from countries that have reported outbreaks of HPAI. The avian influenza or bird flu virus can kill 90 to 100 per cent of the flock on affected farms. The disease can cause outbreaks that may spread rapidly within the country and devastate the poultry industry resulting in economic losses. Additionally, the rural poultry farming community can be negatively affected by the disease due to the high mortalities and this can result in the perpetuation of poverty in affected areas.

Madam Speaker, the current situation is that Zambia has not recorded any cases of HPAI. However, some of our neighbouring countries have continued to see cases and in some instances the disease has been spreading. South Africa has seen the disease spread to new areas and cases are still being reported as of 2nd October, 2017. Zimbabwe last reported cases on 13th September, 2017, but has not resolved the outbreak.

The disease can be spread by wild birds, infected poultry and poultry products as well as contaminated objects such as vehicles and clothes from people who have visited the outbreak areas. Zambia is, therefore, considered to be at high risk to the disease.

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Madam Speaker, it is, therefore, important that any high mortality of chickens, ducks, guinea fowls or any other birds is reported to the nearest Department of Veterinary Services Office. Bird owners must house their poultry in order to avoid interaction between domestic and wild birds and animals. Farmers must reduce the risk of introducing a virus to poultry or other birds by practicing good bio-security and hygiene, which includes preventing any contacts with other domesticated or wild birds, mechanical vectors and fomites, including water resources.

Madam Speaker, as a way of mitigating the risk, my ministry has instituted the following measures:

- (a) a ban on poultry and poultry products imports from HPAI infected countries has been put in place and it will continue until the outbreak in those countries is resolved;
- (b) a ban on poultry and poultry products transiting through HPAI infected countries has been put in place and it will continue until the outbreak in those countries is resolved;
- (c) only importation of breed stock will be allowed from HPAI free countries after a thorough risk assessment;
- (d) reactivated the national response plan on HPAI to respond to the current trait. This plan incorporates several key institutions in sectors such as health, local government, information, tourism, academia, farmer organisation, traders and other stakeholders;
- (e) stepped up disease surveillance in all the high risk areas including water bodies that are within the route for migratory wild birds;

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- (f) awareness materials have been distributed to the high risk border entry points within the country and staff have been sensitised on HPAI threats; and

- (g) in order to mitigate against all trans-boundary animal diseases that can be transmitted via vehicle tires, my ministry is engaging the Ministry of Housing and Infrastructure Development to modify the design of roads to include motor vehicle wheel baths in all border entry points and check points. The construction of these motor vehicles wheel baths will not only strengthen our bio-security measures at the borders and checkpoints, but will also be a means for sensitising members of the general public on livestock disease prevention and control. Additionally, construction of the wheel baths will be a long term solution to disinfecting vehicle tires at these critical entry points and will be more cost effective in the long run than using knapsack sprayers whenever there is a disease threat.

Madam Speaker, my ministry has put these measures in place to prevent the introduction of the disease into the country and safeguard the poultry industry that is worth millions of Kwacha.

Madam Speaker, finally, I would like, again, to appeal to the members of the general public to be vigilant and report any deaths of domestic or wild birds to their nearest veterinary offices so that an island can be raised and professional investigations instituted.

Madam Speaker, I thank you.