

**Question for written answer E-005347/2021
to the Commission**

Rule 138

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Subject: Bird flu and poultry confined indoors: farmers' and consumers' concerns

The reappearance of bird flu in Europe means farmers raising poultry in the open air are being forced to house their birds indoors when their area is declared to be at risk, so that wild birds cannot infect them.

In France, covering outdoor areas with protective netting is the only alternative to this, but it is expensive and difficult to do on lands that slope sometimes. Nor is it very effective since droppings from wild birds can slip through the netting.

Keeping them indoors is harmful, because their henhouses are of a size designed for poultry that live outdoors. Shutting them in constitutes ill-treatment and leads to a comparatively high death rate. Nor does it achieve the desired aim as the virus spreads much more rapidly once it gets into a building and has a higher viral load there. Finally, prolonged confinement indoors contravenes the rules for the designations and labels that rely on poultry being free to go outdoors.

Bird flu cannot be passed on to humans and if the virus is detected on a farm, the whole flock is automatically slaughtered. That being the case, farmers are calling for outdoor rearing of birds to be allowed to continue so they may keep their commitments to consumers.

Will the Commission pay heed to this complaint?