



CFIA Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) Event 2022 - Western HPAI Response

10 January 2025

Re: Distinct Unit Evaluation and request for exemption from destruction order issued on December 31 2024 for Ostriches on BC-820-IP-233 (Universal Ostrich Farms Inc., Edgewood, B.C.)

To Whom It May Concern,

Thank you for submitting the Distinct Unit Assessment request package for the HPAI infected premises of Universal Ostrich Farms Inc.

It is critical that, in honouring requests for exemptions from depopulation, we at CFIA remain aligned with our World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) obligations to Canada's stamping-out policy with regards to the detection of HPAI. We take these requests seriously and give each request that meets our initial screening criteria due consideration. Conclusions reached in reviewing these applications are final and will not be re-evaluated.

WOAH considers the genus *Struthio spp.* (Ostrich) as "poultry" in their definition of poultry and they are not exempt from a stamping-out policy. This stamping-out policy reflects the risks posed by HPAI infected poultry flocks to humans, domestic animals, and wildlife. As part of the stamping-out policy, the CFIA does not consider individual bird test results when evaluating the epidemiological unit on an HPAI infected premises. In order for Canada to mitigate the risks posed by HPAI infected poultry, maintain its international obligations and the expectation of our trading partners, all birds within the HPAI infected epidemiological unit of a non-commercial poultry infected premises must be destroyed and appropriately disposed.

All criteria listed in the Distinct Unit Assessment must be adequately addressed in order to be granted an exemption from depopulation.

The CFIA defines a Distinct Epidemiological Unit as a group of animals on an infected premises that are separated from an infected susceptible population such that they are not considered exposed to the pathogenic agent. After reviewing all the information provided, including, but not limited to, email communications from Universal Ostrich Inc., an on-site visit conducted by CFIA staff as well as all communications for the purposes of completing the premises investigation questionnaire, we did not find that this proposed distinct unit adequately met the criteria for:

- *A distinct epidemiological unit.* There is no evidence that a subset of animals are a distinct unit or at a different level of risk; all animals on the infected premises are under the same risk of HPAI exposure.



The CFIA may grant an exemption to depopulation for select flocks that meet the requirement of having rare and valuable poultry genetics. This consideration requires a significant burden of proof to demonstrate the high economic value the flock provides to the broader poultry industry. Robust processes must be in place (ex. genomic testing) to actively select and breed for specific desirable traits, with subsequent evidence that this genetic value is critical to the Canadian poultry industry. An evaluation of the information provided was conducted to determine if the genetics of the flock were demonstrated to be of uncommon genetic lines that hold a high economic value to the poultry industry; in conjunction with information available at [Animal Genetic Resources of Canada](#), the material provided for evaluation of the birds present at Universal Ostrich Farms Inc. failed to meet the above definition of rare and valuable poultry genetics. After reviewing all of the information provided, including, but not limited to, email communications from Universal Ostrich Inc. and Yasuhiro Tsukamoto, as well as Struthio Biosciences Inc. business plans, the request for an exemption to depopulation based on rare and valuable poultry genetics is denied. This decision is final and is not subject to appeal.

The CFIA/ACIA 4202-Requirement to Dispose of Animals or Things was delivered on December 31, 2024, and must be completed by February 01, 2025. A draft plan for the destruction and disposal of all birds and things listed on the 4202 can be provided to your case officer for subsequent CFIA review and approval. We appreciate that this is a difficult decision, and should you need support regarding a plan for destruction and /or disposal please let your case officer know. We have also provided the link for the [AgSafe](#) mental health website. They have valuable resources that you may find helpful.

Sincerely,

Troy Bourque B.Sc.,D.V.M.

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