



Press Release

SECOND OUTBREAK OF AVIAN INFLUENZA ON ANOTHER ASTRAL POULTRY BREEDING FARM

2 August 2017: Astral Foods Limited (Astral), a leading Southern African integrated poultry producer, reported an outbreak of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) H5N8 in June 2017 affecting one of its poultry breeding farms in Villiers. Despite extreme measures taken to reduce the risk of any further infections on any other Astral farms, a second outbreak of H5N8 has been isolated and confirmed on 1 August 2017 on an Astral poultry breeding facility known as *Welbedacht*, situated on the banks of the Grootdraai dam just outside Standerton in Mpumalanga. This new outbreak is completely unrelated to the Villiers incident.

The Welbedacht farm is similar in size to the Villiers farm, and contains 48 poultry sheds. At this juncture the impact has been limited to only one poultry shed on the farm, and this outbreak is being managed with extreme care and diligence on the back of experiences gained with the first outbreak at Villiers. The spread of the infection to all poultry sheds on the Villiers farm was successfully prevented, and although that farm remains under quarantine no further sign of the disease has been detected amongst the remaining poultry stock on that farm.

Gary Arnold, Managing Director Agriculture, commented: “The Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) reported two new cases of H5N8 infection on 31 July 2017 in the Lekwa Local Municipality (Standerton district), where the virus has been detected in wild bird populations and “backyard” chickens. It is well known that a number of large commercial poultry operations exist in the area, so the presence of this virus in the region presents a serious threat to these operations. Not including the new outbreak on the Welbedacht breeding farm, the total number of outbreaks officially confirmed to date by DAFF stands at ten, with four of these outbreaks reported in commercial poultry, three outbreaks in wild birds, one outbreak in captive hobby birds and two outbreaks in backyard poultry”.

In the short term, this second outbreak of H5N8 will not have any impact on broiler supply to Astral’s poultry processing plants or the supply of chicken to the market. All efforts are being taken to curb this outbreak and limit its impact on this farm, and any further consequences depend solely on whether the infection will spread to other houses on the farm. All stakeholders are reminded that this infection has impacted breeding stock and not broiler birds destined for meat production.

Arnold, stated that: “It now appears that H5N8 is endemic to Mpumalanga and Gauteng, as the virus persists regionally within commercial poultry, wild birds and backyard chickens as

evidenced by its confirmed presence across these provinces. Astral is actively engaging with Government to regulate the use of vaccination programmes against the virus. Globally, commercial vaccines have been developed for use in preventative vaccination programmes against HPAI, and these vaccines have successfully been applied in a number of countries around the world such as Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Mexico, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Vietnam, to name a few. The protection of high value breeding stock in South Africa is imperative in order to curb against large scale financial losses in the local poultry industry, to ensure food security and to curb job losses as a result of production capacity losses in this industry.”

Chris Schutte, Astral’s CEO, concludes: “We trust that Government and the relevant authorities will act swiftly and diligently with their approval to use vaccinations against HPAI in poultry breeding stock. When the country was faced with the invasive Fall Army Worm threat in the maize industry, the matter was dealt with urgently by Government and received personal attention from the Minister of Agriculture. The HPAI outbreak in South Africa is no longer just a concern for individual poultry farmers, but is of national interest to all poultry dependant industries and job creators.”

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Issued and released by:	Keyter Rech Investor Solutions Marlize Keyter 083 701 2021
Issue date:	2 August 2017
JSE code:	ARL
Web-site:	www.astralfoods.com

Company background

Astral Foods Limited (Astral), a leading South African integrated poultry producer, with key activities in animal feed pre-mixes, manufacturing of animal feeds, broiler genetics, production and sale of day-old chicks and hatching eggs, with integrated breeder and broiler production operations, abattoirs as well as sales and distribution of various key poultry brands. The brands in the Astral stable include:

- County Fair
- Festive
- Goldi
- Earlybird
- Mountain Valley
- Ross Poultry Breeders
- National Chicks
- Meadow Feeds
- Tiger Animal Feeds (Zambia)
- Tiger Chicks (Zambia)
- Meadow Feeds (Mozambique)
- Mozpintos (Mozambique)
- CAL Labs
- Provimi SSA

