

## Session 03

## Theatre 6

### **An outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza in domestic ostriches: the current situation in South Africa**

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Avian influenza devastated the ostrich industry of South Africa in 2011, resulting in the cessation of exports of fresh ostrich meat to the European Union as well as the stamping-out slaughter of 37,000 ostriches, representing approximately 15% of the domestic ostrich population of the country. The outbreak also adversely affected 20,000 people who rely directly on the industry for their livelihood. The virus was first detected in March 2011, when birds on five relatively unconnected and geographically distant farms in the Oudtshoorn valley in the south-western region of the country tested seropositive for the H5 subtype. A highly pathogenic strain of avian influenza (HPAI) subtype H5N2 was isolated in April 2011 from one of these properties, and surveillance using serological and PCR techniques revealed a further 29 infected farms in the following three months, 13 of which were confirmed HPAI H5N2 positive using DNA sequencing of the H5 cleavage site. Despite subsequent efforts to contain the disease, using methods such as slaughter, movement control and declaration of an infected area, birds with positive H5 serology were still being detected on new properties in November 2011. Owing to the unique circumstances of this outbreak, and the interaction between several role-players: the National Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries; the Provincial Department of Agriculture; the Ostrich Business Chamber and private and state laboratory services, many challenges were encountered in the management of this disease outbreak campaign. This presentation will provide a brief overview of the situation to date.