

Beat: Health

Bird flu found at 2 more farms in the Netherlands

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USPA News - Bird flu has been found at two more farms in the Netherlands, more than 90 kilometers (56 miles) from where two outbreaks involving the highly pathogenic H5N8 strain were found earlier, authorities said on Friday as the crisis began to cripple the industry. The Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs said laboratory testing confirmed the presence of bird flu at a poultry farm in Kamperveen, a village in the province of Overijssel, about 70 kilometers (43 miles) northeast of Amsterdam.

The farm, which has about 10,000 chickens, is some 93 kilometers (57 miles) northeast of Hekendorp, the site of the first outbreak a week ago. Hours after laboratory testing confirmed bird flu at the farm in Kamperveen, the Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (NVWA) reported finding clinical signs of bird flu at a neighboring farm, which is home to about 15,000 ducks. The exact strain of the bird flu in Kamperveen is not yet known. All 25,000 chickens and ducks from both farms will be culled, and other animals at a third poultry farm nearby are being killed as a precaution. Samples will also be taken from 32 other poultry farms in a 10-kilometer (6.2-mile) radius surrounding the farms in Kamperveen. Friday's news came as further laboratory testing confirmed that bird flu found on Thursday at a poultry farm in Ter Aar, which is about 18 kilometers (11 miles) northeast of Hekendorp, also involves the highly pathogenic H5N8 strain. The cull of about 43,000 chickens at the farm in Ter Aar is expected to finish on Friday. The new bird flu outbreaks are a further blow to the Dutch poultry industry, which has come to a nearly complete standstill since the first case was confirmed late last week. The government said Friday that a national ban on the movement of poultry, eggs, poultry manure, and poultry litter would continue. Other measures are also in place, such as a national ban on hunting and the movement of any birds. The Netherlands was hit hard by an epidemic of the H7N7 bird flu strain in 2003, resulting in the cull of more than 25 million birds. It also infected at least 89 people, all except three whom had been in contact with poultry. One of the victims, a veterinarian, died after having close contact with infected poultry. Albert Jan Maat, the chairman of employers' organization LTO Netherlands, on Friday called on all professional and private bird owners to strictly adhere to the rules. "Confine each chicken and each poultry animal, follow all the sanitation rules and report all poultry with signs of illness," he urged owners. The bird flu outbreaks in Europe began early this month when a turkey tested positive for H5N8 at a farm in northeastern Germany, after which all susceptible birds present at the farm were destroyed. In addition to the four bird flu outbreaks in the Netherlands, samples taken from a duck breeding farm in northern England tested positive for H5N8 earlier this week. The World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) said on Wednesday that the H5N8 virus found in Europe is closely related to the strain found in South Korea. "The OIE suspects that the virus was carried by wild birds from Asia - where the virus was found before the recent cases in Europe - to Germany, Netherlands and the UK," said OIE spokeswoman Catherine Bertrand-Ferrandis. Wild birds are known to be able to carry bird flu viruses without getting sick and their migratory flyways sometimes result in outbreaks along their path. But the virus can also spread from farm to farm on the shoes or clothing of workers, by the movement of domestic live birds, and through contaminated vehicles, equipment, food, and cages.

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