

Beat: Arts

Bird flu outbreaks in Europe likely caused by wild birds from Asia

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USPA News - A highly pathogenic strain of bird flu which was found at farms in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Germany this month was likely brought to Europe by wild birds from Asia, possibly from South Korea, animal health officials said on Wednesday. The World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) said laboratory investigations showed that the H5N8 virus found in Europe this month 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. South Korea experienced 29 outbreaks of H5N8 bird flu in the first eight months of this year, with cases reported among geese, chickens and ducks. Close to 600,000 birds were culled until the outbreak was declared over in September, but a new outbreak was reported just weeks later. Some 1,200 birds died in the outbreak among ducks in September, after which 19,800 more were culled. Some 112,000 birds were also culled in Japan after 1,100 cases of H5N8 were reported at a farm in April. Japanese authorities also reported finding the virus in two faecal samples taken from tundra swan earlier this month, while China detected the virus last month in both a duck and an environmental sample. 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. The bird flu outbreak 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. More cases were found at a poultry farm in the Netherlands over the weekend, where about 1,000 chickens tested positive for the virus. All 150,000 layer and breeding hens were culled. Samples taken from a duck breeding farm in northern England also tested positive for H5N8.

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United Press Association, Inc.
3651 Lindell Road, Suite D168
Las Vegas, NV 89103, USA
(702) 943.0321 Local
(702) 943.0233 Facsimile
info@unitedpressassociation.org
info@gna24.com
www.gna24.com