

Evening News

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US brings in ban on French meat

THE United States has suspended imports of French meat products on safety grounds.

The ban came hours after the European Union introduced a Europe-wide ban on US poultry and egg imports after a bird flu outbreak in Texas.

The US says the ban was imposed after a team of farm officials visited 11 French firms and found "repeated problems". Items such as sausages, hams and foie gras are affected, according to France's Agriculture Ministry.

A spokesman for the US Food and Safety Inspection Service, Steven Cohen, said the problems related mainly to sanitation.

Mr Cohen said inspection systems in France had to be equivalent to those in the United States and the French system would require attention to bring it to the necessary standard.

But a statement from the French Agriculture Ministry objected to the US position.

"France agrees neither with the statements made by the US authorities, nor the conclusions they thought they needed to draw from them," it said.

The ministry added that French farm minister Herve Gaymard had taken a last-minute trip to Washington on Monday to present the steps taken by French firms to comply with specific US standards. However, this failed to prevent the ban.

Mr Gaymond said he wanted to see the export of French meat products to the US restart "as soon as possible".

America's poultry growers are feeling increasing pain as more of the nation's trading partners ban imports of US chickens, turkeys, eggs and other products following the discovery of a dangerous strain of avian flu in Texas.

South Korea and Mexico as well as the European Union have banned poultry imports.

Web links

- [Dept of Health - pandemic flu](http://www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/EmergencyPlanning/PandemicFlu/fs/en)
<http://www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/EmergencyPlanning/PandemicFlu/fs/en>
- [WHO - Bird Flu fact sheet](http://www.who.int/csr/don/2004_01_15/en/)
http://www.who.int/csr/don/2004_01_15/en/



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