

SCOTLAND on SUNDAY

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Ukraine hit by its first outbreak of bird flu

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UKRAINE has recorded its first outbreak of bird flu, after finding more than 1,500 dead birds in the Black Sea region of Crimea.

The dead birds, domesticated chickens and geese, tested positive for the H5 subtype and were found in five villages in the Crimea's Sovetskiy, Nizhnegorskiy and Dzhankovskiy regions, said Ihor Krol, spokesman for Ukraine's Emergency Situations Ministry.

He said authorities had imposed a quarantine on the villages and people in contact with dead birds were being monitored for health problems. The carcasses were being burned, Krol said.

A team of experts was sent to the area to investigate and the government's top officials had an emergency meeting, an Agriculture Ministry official said.

Samples are to be sent to laboratories in Italy and Britain for tests to determine if the disease could be the deadly H5N1 strain, which is being monitored for fear it could mutate into a form that is easily transferable among humans.



The birds began dying on October 18, but the deaths increased significantly last month and the confirmation that it was bird flu came late on Friday, Krol said.

"It's a frightening, lightning-fast form [of the virus]," Maria Trukhanovskaya, chief veterinary official of the Crimea region. "It's one of the strongest viruses. The internal organs did not change at all. It's like an electric shock."

Bird flu had been found in neighbouring countries, and Ukraine's Black Sea peninsula has always been seen as an area of special concern for authorities because it is a landing spot for many migratory birds.

Ukraine had enacted tough border controls and strengthened poultry regulations.

Yesterday, it banned all sales of domestic fowl in the Crimea.

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/)
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