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World on alert as bird flu reaches the Urals

MARIA GOLOVNINA IN MOSCOW

RUSSIA warned the world yesterday that migrating birds could export the bird flu virus to Europe and the Middle East within months.

The disease, previously reported in five remote areas of Siberia, appeared to be moving west after it hit the Chelyabinsk industrial region in the Ural mountains, which form the boundary between Asia and Europe. Officials said it was likely to spread further.

"Migrating birds may spread the virus to nearby countries, Azerbaijan, Iran, Iraq, Georgia, Ukraine and Mediterranean countries, because bird migration routes from Siberia also go through those regions in autumn," said one.

Scientists fear that the fatal virus, which humans can catch but not yet pass on to others, will mutate and kill millions of people worldwide.

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/

Related topic

- [Bird flu](http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=161)
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