

Swine flu detected in Chilean turkeys: vets

August 21 2009

An outbreak of swine flu has been detected in two turkey farms in Chile, government veterinary services in the country said.

If confirmed, it would be the first infection reported in birds. So far, the [virus](#) has affected humans and pigs.

"The presence of an A(H1N1) virus has been detected in two farms in the Valparaiso region," just west of the capital Santiago, the Chilean agriculture ministry said in a statement issued late Thursday.

"Precautionary measures designed to avoid a spread of the disease to protect the health of population were immediately taken," it said.

The World Organization for Animal Health, based in Paris, said it had not as yet received notification of that or any swine flu infection in fowl.

According to Chilean authorities, the alert over the turkey farms was raised August 13 when the company running the properties noticed a sudden drop in egg production.

The farms have been put under quarantine, and officials said other measures had been taken to guarantee that consumers of Chilean turkeys and derivative products, both in the country and abroad, would not be at risk.

"There is no evidence of the disease being present in the rest of the country," the agriculture ministry said.

A senior health ministry official, Jeanette Vega, said that the virus found in the turkeys was not a mutated form of the A(H1N1) virus, and that the birds had likely caught the illness from humans.

"What happened in this case is that we, human beings, infected the turkeys. The virus identified in the [turkeys](#) is the human sort -- there is no mutation," she said.

However there were concerns that a transmission of the virus to birds could point to a possible mutation of A(H1N1) in the future. It was feared swine flu could combine with a form of [bird flu](#) to produce a virulent and more deadly virus.

Chile is one of the countries worst-hit by A(H1N1) in South America, the region which accounts for over 70 percent of the 1,800 deaths worldwide.

According to the latest bulletin by Chile's health ministry, published on Wednesday, 116 people have died of [swine flu](#). Another 12,000 people were treated for infections of the virus.

Authorities in the country say the rate of contamination in the population is slowing.

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