

# Netherlands to slaughter more animals in Q fever epidemic

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The Netherlands stepped up measures Wednesday against the world's biggest Q fever epidemic that has killed 10 humans, by ordering the slaughter of over 30,000 animals, a press release said.

The ministry of agriculture announced the "preventative slaughter" of 34,000 expectant [goats](#) and ewes, and 1,200 billy goats "will be killed too as they can transmit the infection through their sperm".

Q [fever](#), found in 55 Dutch farms so far, has killed six people in 2009 and Dutch authorities say 10 farm workers have died in total since the fever appeared in 2007 in the south of the country.

The slaughter had involved 15,000-20,000 non-vaccinated expectant goats, but this has now been extended to vaccinated animals in an attempt to limit the spread of bacteria when animals give birth or during forced abortions.

The slaughter accounts for more than half the [livestock](#) from the 55 infected farms, mostly situated in the southern Brabant province.

The authorities warn that the slaughter will now be carried out in all farms where the infection is found.

All reproductive activity in ovine and caprine farms is forbidden until July 2010 and reproduction between animals in the infected farms has been banned for life.

An obligatory animal vaccination campaign was launched at the start of 2009 in the Netherlands, but due to a lack of vaccinations, it was not able to cover the whole country.

In humans the symptoms of Q fever are similar to [flu](#).

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