

Taiwan official quits over 'bird flu cover-up'

March 4 2012

A top Taiwan agriculture official stepped down Sunday amid allegations he covered up bird flu outbreaks, a day after authorities said they had culled thousands of chickens.

Hsu Tien-lai, the chief of the Bureau of Animal and Plant Health Inspection and Quarantine had tendered his resignation, Council of Agriculture spokesman Wang Cheng-taung told AFP.

Hsu was accused in a documentary of covering up outbreaks of H5N2 [bird flu](#), a less [virulent strain](#) of the virus.

Wang insisted that the "approval of Hsu's resignation is not an indication that he had 'covered up' the [flu outbreak](#)", adding that the accusations would be investigated.

Wang also confirmed Sunday Taiwan's poultry exports would be suspended for at least three months, with an estimated loss of up to Tw\$600 million (\$20.27 million) this year.

Taiwan reported its first outbreak of H5N2 -- which officials say does not affect human health -- in 2004 but has remained clear of the more virulent [H5N1](#) strain, which is potentially fatal for humans.

Hsu's unit confirmed Saturday that nearly 58,000 chickens had been culled at two farms on the island following the latest outbreak, most of them at a farm in central Changhua county.

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