

Georgia sees more anthrax cases

June 22 2012, by MISHA DZHINDZHIKHASHVILI

(AP) — At least 30 people in Georgia have contracted anthrax this year, prompting authorities to step up safety measures, medical officials said Friday.

Georgia's Center for Infectious Diseases said that by year's end the ex-Soviet nation is expected to roughly match last year's total of 59 cases. That would represent a marked increase from the 28 [anthrax](#) cases the Caucasus Mountains country had in 2010.

Naira Gogebashvili, a leading expert of a Tbilisi clinic treating infectious diseases, said some of the patients contracted anthrax due to violations of safety procedures regarding the burial of sick animals.

"They should be buried in specially allocated ground, not in accidental places as it often happens," she told The Associated Press.

One of the hospital's patients, Alexei Alaichev, a 58-year-old resident of the town of Tsalka in southern Georgia, contracted anthrax while cultivating a potato field.

"I rubbed my hand and after several hours I saw that it's covered with sores," he said. "It turned out that a cow that died of anthrax was buried nearby. They conducted a check and found out it was buried not deeply enough."

Most of the cases this year have been registered in eastern Georgia near the border with Azerbaijan, but the infection has spread to other regions

as well.

Dzhemal Kaldani, 49, a resident of the village of Lemshveniera in the Gardaban region that borders Azerbaijan, said he got sick after helping a neighbor to cut a dead cow. "We had no idea that the cow had anthrax," he said, showing his arms still covered with sores.

Kaldani said that authorities quickly vaccinated all cows in the region following several anthrax cases.

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