

Taiwan finds H5N1 virus in birds smuggled from China

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Dozens of pet birds smuggled from southern China into Taiwan tested positive for the deadly H5N1 avian flu virus and were destroyed, Taiwanese authorities said Tuesday.

The smuggler bought the 38 birds in the Chinese city of Guangzhou and was caught at the Taoyuan international airport in northern Taiwan when he returned via Macau earlier this month, said the Centers for Disease Control.

The birds later tested positive for the [H5N1 virus](#) and were killed, it said, adding that nine people who had contact with the birds had not shown any [flu symptoms](#) during a ten-day screening.

Taiwan has no recorded cases of the deadly H5N1 strain, although in 2005 health authorities said eight pet birds smuggled from China tested positive for the strain and destroyed.

The island has reported several outbreaks of the H5N2 bird flu, a less virulent strain of the virus, in recent years.

China is considered one of the nations most at risk of bird [flu epidemics](#) because it has the world's biggest poultry population and many chickens in rural areas are kept close to humans.

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