

Mass DNA sampling convicts Dutchman of 1999 rape-murder

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Mass DNA sampling led to the jailing Friday of a father-of-two for the shocking rape and murder of a teenaged girl in a rural part of the Netherlands 14 years ago.

A court in northern city Leeuwarden jailed farmer Jasper Steringa for 18 years for the 1999 murder of 16-year-old Marianne Vaatstra. The crime had initially been blamed on asylum seekers.

Steringa, 45, lived for 13 years less than a mile and a half (two kilometres) from the field where Vaatstra's body was found, raped, strangled and with her throat cut.

She disappeared during the night of April 30 as she returned home by bicycle from celebrating the Dutch national day, Koninginnedag.

The investigation went cold and was only reopened after changes in Dutch law last year allowed police to identify a suspect by comparing DNA found on a [crime scene](#) with [genetic material](#) indicating a family relation.

Around 7,300 men turned up voluntarily in September to specially set-up DNA-testing stations in the area to have the inside of their cheeks swabbed.

One of those men was Steringa, who reportedly knew the game was up because, thanks to the change in the law, a DNA test of one of his

relatives would also have identified him.

Steringa confessed to the crime and said that he hadn't handed himself in before because he wanted to see his children grow up.

"The [probability](#) of a man chosen at random having the same DNA is around one in 1,5000 billion. That effectively means that the suspect's DNA is the same of Jasper S.," the court said in a statement.

At the time of the murder, fingers were pointed at two men from Iraq and Afghanistan who had shortly before left a nearby centre for [asylum-seekers](#).

[DNA tests](#) after they were arrested proved them innocent, but rumours about the asylum centre persisted.

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