

German cull ordered after H5N8 bird flu confirmed

December 16 2014

German authorities on Tuesday ordered the cull of thousands of farm animals after a bird flu outbreak was confirmed as the highly pathogenic H5N8 strain.

The precautionary move came after the discovery at a poultry farm in a rural region of Lower Saxony state.

Regional agricultural minister Christian Meyer said that 19,000 animals at the site and another 12,000 turkeys at a neighbouring farm would be slaughtered.

He said the strain detected in the Cloppenburg district was the same as that found at another farm in November in Schleswig-Holstein state.

Meyer expressed concern that the virus could spread quickly.

"Cloppenburg is a traditional heartland of the poultry industry," he said.

The district had already imposed a three-day ban on all poultry transports to thwart the potential spread of H5N8.

Some strains of avian influenza are fatal for birds, and pose a health threat to humans, who can fall sick after handling infected poultry.

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