

Belgian meat plant quarantines 225 staff

August 5 2020



More than a quarter of staff have been quarantined

One of Belgium's biggest meat processing plants has sent 225 staff home to quarantine Wednesday after a cluster of coronavirus cases was discovered, the firm and the local mayor said.

Abattoirs and meat-packing [plants](#) have become [infection](#) hotspots in

other countries as the world deals with the epidemic and the big Westvlees facility in Staden, in northwest Belgium is now under close watch.

According to a Westvlees spokesman, Manuel Goderis, a number of cases of COVID-19 infection were discovered in recent days in the pork-cutting section of the plant, which employs 225 of the more than 800 workers on site.

"We decided not to take any risks and to test all the employees of this production unit and to put them in quarantine," he said. The workers were tested on Wednesday and results are expected on Thursday.

The bourgmestre or mayor of Staden, Francesco Vanderjeugd, told AFP that six confirmed cases had been reported earlier in the day and that the number had risen to 18 within hours, even as mass testing was ordered.

Two of the initial six cases were cross-border workers from France, two came from Staden and two from elsewhere in West Flanders, he added.

Westvlees is one of Europe's biggest producers of fresh and processed pork. It butchers 1.4 million pigs per year and supplies 140,000 tonnes of meat to clients worldwide.

Belgium has one of the highest per capita rates of COVID-19 in the world and infection rates are again rising after earlier success in bringing the epidemic under control. Out of a population of around 11 million, 9,852 have died.

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