

# Birds may spread bird flu along flyways

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Wild birds may spread avian influenza along their migratory routes, the U.N. Food and Agricultural Organization warned Wednesday.

The Rome-based FAO said emergency preparedness is essential to halt the spread of the deadly H5N1 virus into Europe, Africa, South Asia and the Middle East.

"FAO is concerned that poor countries in southeast Europe, where wild birds from Asia mingle with others from northern Europe, may lack the capacity to detect and deal with outbreaks of bird flu," said Joseph Domenech, FAO's chief veterinary officer.

Asian bird migration routes also run across Azerbaijan, Iran, Iraq, India, Bangladesh, Georgia, Ukraine and some Mediterranean nations, the FAO said.

Bird flu has killed more than 60 people in Asia since 2003 and more than 140 million birds have died or have been slaughtered in the effort to contain outbreaks.

Health experts have warned bird flu has the potential to trigger a global human pandemic if the virus adapts and becomes easily transmitted among humans.

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