

EU to step up bird flu monitoring

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European Union officials meeting in Brussels Thursday called for facilitating monitoring of migratory flocks for bird flu.

"The key to this problem is early detection and rapid action," said European Commission spokesman Philip Tod.

Tod did not say how much the EU would spend on monitoring in the 25-member-states, reported the BBC.

Despite some 11,000 infected birds reported in Siberia in Russia, a general ban on keeping poultry outdoors was "not considered appropriate to the current risk of disease" from migratory birds, Tod said.

The Netherlands ordered Dutch farmers to keep all poultry indoors or in protected enclosures beginning this week. Germany is considering a similar move.

"Most of the people in Europe who do not have daily close contact with infected or diseased birds ... do not have to worry about getting this bird flu," said Dr. Arnold Bosman of the European Center for Disease Control. However, Bosman said farmers, veterinarians and poultry workers would be at risk.

Some officials are worried the disease could mutate and pass to humans creating a flu pandemic.

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