

France accused of not disclosing bird flu

March 17 2006

A former British health minister and European Parliament member has accused French officials of not disclosing the discovery of a wild duck with bird flu.

John Bowis, a member of the European Parliament's Center-Right, said the French "played the system" when its official confirmation message of bird flu, signed by France's chief veterinary officer, gave the wrong date for the discovery of the duck.

France has insisted that it had acted "with perfect transparency" and told the truth about seven dead ducks found by a hunter Feb. 11 near a lake at Joyeux, in eastern France, the Times of London reported.

The European Union requires nations that suspect bird flu to test immediately, but France waited two days, the Times said. A turkey farm near the discovery of bird flu became the first poultry business in Europe to contract the virus, the Times reported.

A French hunting office spokesman said the seven dead ducks suspected of bird flu were put in storage because the laboratory in Bourg-en-Bresse, France, did not work over the weekend.

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