

Expert predicts Russian bird flu pandemic

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A senior Russian official has predicted that a bird flu pandemic is highly probable in Russia this summer.

"The epicenter of the bird flu virus ... has shifted to Russia," Gennady Onishchenko, head of the Federal Consumer Protection Service, told a news conference Tuesday.

Unusually warm temperatures in the southern regions of Russia, combined with cooler-than-average weather in Iran and Turkey, have led migrating birds to nest in unlikely places this year, Onishchenko said.

"This explains early bird flu outbreaks in (the southern Russian republic) Dagestan and other locations in the Southern Federal District," he said.

Onishchenko also said uninfected migrating birds would arrive in Siberia and the Urals region by the end of April, and likely would become infected by the summer, RIA Novosti reported.

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