

Belgium announces measures for bird flu outbreak

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Belgium has detected an outbreak of bird flu, leading authorities to order all poultry farmers and individual bird owners to keep the animals confined, the country's food safety agency AFSCA said Saturday.

Avian influenza has recently spread to western Europe after outbreaks in Russia and Kazakhstan this summer.

"Three wild birds that stayed in a bird sanctuary in Ostend tested positive for the H5N8 virus," AFSCA said in a statement on Saturday, adding that the outbreak was confirmed the day before by the Sciensano public health institute.

AFSCA said the new measures would be effective from Sunday and would apply to private poultry houses as well as individuals who keep birds in their homes, in a country where there is a strong tradition of pigeon racing.

"All gatherings of poultry and birds are strictly prohibited," the statement said, adding that [preventive measures](#) were imposed on professional pigeon farms on November 1.

France this month ordered measures for poultry farms such as protective netting to prevent contact with wild birds that spread the disease, after the country's ministry of agriculture warned that bird flu infections were on the rise in western Europe.

In addition to cases declared in the Netherlands, the ministry pointed to "13 cases in [wild birds](#) in Germany" and an outbreak on November 3 in the northwest of England.

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