French bird flu outbreak coming under control: government

January 21 2021

A bird flu outbreak that has required culls of hundreds of thousands of ducks in southwest France "seems under control for now," the government's top official in the region said Thursday.

"If the situation stays the same, we should be able to fully control this outbreak—though that doesn't mean that we won't have several more weeks of work in front of us," Fabienne Buccio, prefect for the Nouvelle-Aquitaine department, told a briefing in Bordeaux.

As of January 14 more than one million birds, mainly ducks, have been culled to halt the spread of a severe strain that has devastated flocks.

Officials ordered the massive culls as well as strict travel restrictions and buffer zones around infected sites in the area, a bastion of France's lucrative foie gras industry.

Buccio said the "drastic" measures had proved "appropriate and effective", though she warned that a new surge could not be excluded.

The highly contagious H5N8 virus was first detected in a bird in a pet shop on the Mediterranean island of Corsica in November before spreading to duck farms on the mainland in December.

Overall 348 infected flocks have been detected—in the Landes department alone, outbreaks have been discovered at 272 sites out of around 850 in total.

The government has promised compensation for poultry farmers who have already been hit by massive bird flu outbreaks in the winters of 2015-16 and 2016-17.

Besides France and Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden, Britain and Ireland have also reported bird flu outbreaks since the winter began.

© 2021 AFP

Citation: French bird flu outbreak coming under control: government (2021, January 21) retrieved 27 June 2024 from https://phys.org/news/2021-01-french-bird-flu-outbreak.html