Beat: Health

UPDATE1 -- Bird flu found at 2 poultry farms in Canada

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USPA News - A bird flu virus of subtype H5 has been found at two poultry farms in British Columbia, the Canadian government confirmed on Tuesday, but further testing is needed to determine whether it involves the H5N8 strain that has been found in Europe and Asia. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) said initial tests were carried out on Monday after the sudden deaths of birds over the weekend at a turkey farm in Abbotsford and a broiler breeder farm in Chilliwack, which are about 8 kilometers (4.9 miles) apart.

Test results came back on Tuesday that confirmed the birds had died of a bird flu virus of subtype H5. "Further testing by the CFIA is underway to confirm pathogenicity and to determine the precise subtype and strain of the virus," the agency said in a news release, adding that results are expected later this week. There are some 18,000 birds at the two affected farms, but about half of the birds at both farms has already died of the virus, indicating it involves a highly pathogenic virus. The birds which are still alive will be culled and destroyed before CFIA starts the cleaning and disinfection of the barns, vehicles, equipment and tools to eliminate any infectious material. "The Province of British Columbia, the CFIA, the owners of the infected birds, and the poultry industry are working closely together to manage the situation," CFIA said. "Both levels of government will work with the poultry industry to address issues as they emerge. The Canadian poultry sector currently practices a high level of biosecurity that reduces the risk of disease spread." The bird flu outbreak in Canada follows a series of outbreaks in Europe in recent weeks, which the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) said was likely caused by wild birds from Asia. The outbreaks in Asia and Europe involved the highly pathogenic H5N8 bird flu strain, but it is not yet known whether the outbreak in Canada involves the same subtype. The bird flu outbreaks in Europe began in early November when a turkey tested positive for H5N8 at a farm in northeastern Germany, after which all susceptible birds present at the farm were destroyed. A second outbreak was found at a poultry farm in the Netherlands on November 15, followed by outbreaks at five additional farms in recent weeks. A case of H5N8 bird flu was also found at a duck breeding farm in northern England last month, as well as in two Eurasian wigeons in the Netherlands and in a Eurasian teal in northern Germany. South Korea experienced about 30 H5N8 outbreaks earlier this year, while Japan and China reported finding the virus in wild birds. Wild birds are known to be able to carry bird flu viruses without getting sick and their migratory flyways sometimes result in outbreaks along their path. But the virus can also spread from farm to farm on the shoes or clothing of workers, by the movement of domestic live birds, and through contaminated vehicles, equipment, food, and cages.

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