



AS IT IS

## Bird Flu Spreads to More Countries

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Avian flu has reached new areas of the world and has become a year-round problem, animal and disease experts warn.

More than 20 experts and farmers on four continents spoke to the Reuters news agency about the problem. They suggested that record **outbreaks** will not stop soon on **poultry** farms. They also warned that farmers must view the disease as a serious risk all year, instead of doing prevention efforts during spring movement seasons for wild birds. The outbreaks of the virus have continued through the summer heat and winter cold in North and South America, Europe, Asia and Africa.

Egg prices set records after the disease killed tens of millions of chickens last year. These record prices, at a time of worldwide economic problems, are especially damaging to people who use eggs as a main source of protein.

Wild birds are mainly responsible for spreading the virus, experts say. Waterfowl like ducks can carry the disease without dying and pass it to poultry through **contaminated** waste, **saliva** and other means.

Farmers' best efforts to protect their birds are falling short.

In the United States, Rose Acre Farms, the country's second-largest egg producer, lost about 1.5 million chickens at a Guthrie County, Iowa, production farm last year. These losses occurred even though anyone who entered **barns** was required to shower first to remove any sign of the virus, Chief Executive Marcus Rust said.

A company farm in Weld County, Colorado, was infected twice within about six months, killing more than 3 million chickens, Rust said. He thinks wind blew the virus in from nearby fields where geese left their waste.

The U.S., Britain, France and Japan are among the countries that have suffered record losses of poultry over the past year, leaving some farmers feeling helpless.

"Avian flu is **occurring** even in a new poultry farm with modern equipment and no windows, so all we could do now is ask God to avoid an outbreak," said Shigeo Inaba, who raises chickens for meat in Ibaraki, near Tokyo.

### **Virus is here to stay**

The virus is usually deadly to poultry, and entire groups of birds are killed when even one bird tests **positive**.

Vaccinations are not a simple solution: they may reduce but not eliminate the threat from the virus, making it harder to detect its presence among the birds. Still, Mexico and the European Union are among those vaccinating or considering shots.

Wild birds have spread the disease farther and wider around the world than ever before, likely carrying record amounts of the virus, said Gregorio Torres. Torres is the head of the science department at the Paris-based World Organization for Animal Health, an intergovernmental group for animal diseases. The virus changed from previous outbreaks to a form that is probably more easily spread, he told Reuters.

"The disease is here to stay at least in the short term," Torres said.

While the virus can infect people, usually those who have contact with infected birds, the World Health Organization says the risk to humans remains low.

I'm John Russell.

*Tom Polansek reported on this story for Reuters. John Russell adapted it for VOA Learning English.*

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## **Words in This Story**

**outbreak** -- *n.* a sudden start or increase of fighting or disease

**poultry** – n. birds (such as chickens) that are raised on farms for their eggs or meat

**contaminated** -- *adj.* to make (something) dangerous, dirty, or impure by adding something harmful or undesirable to it

**saliva** – n. the liquid produced in your mouth that keeps your mouth moist

**barn** – n. a building on a farm that is used for keeping farm animals or equipment

**occur** -- *v.* to happen; to appear or exist; to be found

**positive** -- *adj.* thinking about the good qualities of someone or something : thinking that a good result will happen : hopeful or optimistic

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