

# H5N1 in French turkeys

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- *From:* " Jill" <newsNOSPAM@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>
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France says tests find H5 bird flu at turkey farm  
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PARIS (Reuters) – France said on Friday tests had confirmed the presence of an H5 bird flu virus at a turkey farm in the east of the country and tests for the H5N1 strain were still under way.

France said on Thursday a suspected outbreak of H5N1 bird flu had decimated thousands of turkeys at a farm situated in the department of Ain, where two cases of the disease have already been confirmed in wild ducks.

"I know that it is the H5 virus, which is a very pathogenic virus,"

Agriculture Minister Dominique Bussereau told France 2 television, adding that test results for H5N1 were not yet available.

If confirmed, the case would mark the first time the H5N1 virus had spread to domestic fowl in the European Union and could deal a further blow to France's already battered poultry industry, worth 6 billion euros (\$7 billion) a year and the biggest in the bloc.

Local sources said around 80 percent of the birds at the farm, which has more than 11,000 birds and is in a region famous for the quality of its chickens, had already died. All remaining turkeys were to be culled, the ministry said on Thursday.

"The suspicions we had yesterday and which have caused us to unfortunately cull the animals and destroy them afterwards was confirmed this morning," Bussereau told France 2.

A security zone of three km and a surveillance zone of seven km (five miles) had been set up around the farm as is usual under European Union emergency measures, officials say.

French Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin has announced a government aid package worth 52 million euros for the poultry sector to cope with the crisis.

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Jill Bowis

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