Thousands more poultry culled as bird flu fears grow in Taiwan

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Aauthorities on Friday ordered the culling of the chickens at a farm in the southern county of Pingtung after samples tested positive for H5N2, one of the less virulent strains of avian flu.

Officials Sunday ordered the slaughter of 7,500 ducks at a farm in Pingtung and 8,500 geese at five farms in Yunlin and Chiayi, two counties also in the south, after a new variant of H5N2 as well as the H5N8 strain were detected.

"This (H5N8) has never been discovered in Taiwan before, it probably could be brought to Taiwan by migratory birds," Chang Su-san, head of the Bureau of Animal and Plant Health Inspection and Quarantine, told reporters.

The H5N8 virus had previously hit Europe, South Korea, Japan, Canada and the United States, prompting the culling of poultry.

Many of the duck and geese farms were also asked to strengthen nets to prevent contacts between poultry and wild birds.

The island has reported several outbreaks of H5N2 in recent years.

But Taiwan has no recorded cases of the potentially deadly H5N1 strain, although authorities said pet birds smuggled from China tested positive for the strain in 2005 and 2012.

The birds were subsequently destroyed.

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