

POULTRY FARMING

Bird flu vaccines being tested



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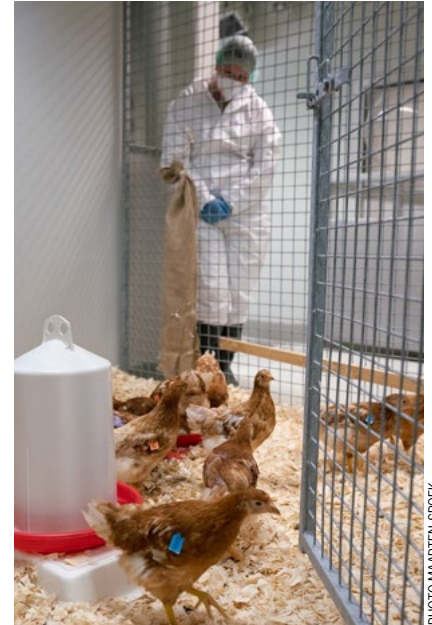


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Wageningen is testing the effectiveness of three bird flu vaccines. 'A vaccine has to not only protect against the disease but also stop the virus from spreading,' says Nancy Beerens, bird flu researcher at Wageningen Bioveterinary Research.

'In the past, the Netherlands never had bird flu infections in the summer,' says Beerens. 'But this year for the first time, the bird flu season did not end with the departure of the migratory birds in April.' Commercial poultry farms are having to deal with culls and a long-lasting requirement to keep birds indoors, which has been in place for more than a year in many parts of the Netherlands. Calls are

therefore getting louder for an effective vaccine in the fight against bird flu, notes Beerens.

In the trial, vaccines for the current H5 virus are tested in laying hens. The trial involves new types of vaccines from three pharmaceutical companies. The team hopes the trial will reveal the effectiveness of the vaccines in preventing symptoms and in curbing the spread of the virus, as

these are two different things.

Beerens: 'If a vaccinated flock becomes infected with bird flu and this is not picked up because of the lack of symptoms, the virus can spread undetected between farms.' That is the reason why the international trade in vaccinated poultry is restricted at present. 'The new types of vaccines are expected to offer better protection against the spread of the virus. It is also possible to distinguish vaccinated birds from infected ones.' That would be a significant step towards lifting the export restrictions.

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