

Bird flu back in Bengal, culling to start Sunday

Bird flu has been detected in West Bengal's Darjeeling district where culling of thousands of poultry will begin Sunday in five affected villages, an official said.

The Bhopal-based High Security Animal Disease Laboratory confirmed Friday that the samples sent from Bijanbari block May 11 were H5N1 virus affected. 'We are sending around 200 cullers to the five affected villages - Samalbong, Singtam, Som, Liza Hill and Chongtong,' state Animal Resources Development Minister Anisur Rehaman told IANS here Saturday.

'About 17,000 birds, including ducks, will be culled within a five km radius. Movement of vehicles carrying poultry products will be restricted in a periphery of 10 km. Selling and consuming chicken in the block has been banned,' he added.

According to sources at the district administration office, the poultry farmers will be given compensation Monday.

'The compensation has been fixed at Rs.50 for an egg-laying bird, Rs.20 for a chick, Rs.75 for a duck and Rs.2 for an egg,' sources said.

Bird flu resurfaced at the nearby Sukna block in the district May 9 and then it spread to Bijanbari block.

Avian flu had broken out in West Bengal in January this year. The disease hit 13 of 19 districts in the state leading to around four million poultry birds being culled.

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