

# New bird flu strain detected in Nigeria

A new strain of avian flu never before reported in Africa has been identified in Nigeria, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) announced Monday.

Tests conducted by Nigeria and by the FAO show that the new virus strain - which is similar to strains identified last year in Italy, Afghanistan and Iran - is genetically distinct from other forms detected in Nigerian outbreaks in 2006 and 2007.

"It seems unlikely that wild birds have carried the strain to Africa, since the last migration of wild birds from Europe and Central Asia to Africa occurred in September 2007 and this year's southerly migration into Africa has not really started yet," said Scott Newman, International Wildlife Coordinator of FAO's Animal Health Service.

He pointed to other avenues the virus could have taken to Nigeria, such as international trade or illegal and unreported movement of poultry.

"This increases the risk of an avian influenza spread to other countries in Western Africa."

The FAO called for stepped up surveillance to monitor the virus and keep track of its spread.

"Many countries have succeeded in getting the virus under control; but as long as avian influenza remains endemic in some countries, the international community needs to be on alert," said Joseph Domenech, FAO's Chief Veterinary Officer.

The avian flu, or H5N1, has impacted more than 60 countries since the epidemic began five years ago in Asia and most nations have eliminated it from poultry.

In Nigeria, bird flu was contained after being found in 25 states.

FAO has a team of animal health experts and veterinary epidemiologists working with the West African nation's Government.

*Article published courtesy of [BuaNews](#)*