

Flu virus confirmed in migratory birds

China has confirmed the deadly avian flu virus was found for the first time in migratory birds, raising fears the disease could spread to other regions.

The discovery of the H5N1 strain of avian flu was published in scientific journals Thursday. The concern is that the migratory birds could spread the virus to regions of South Asia that have not yet been affected, the Financial Times reported.

The virus has killed 54 people and led to the destruction of millions of chickens in Southeast Asia.

Two scientific teams in China and Hong Kong confirmed the H5N1 strain was responsible for the current flu outbreak among geese and other wildfowl at the remote Qinghai Lake in the west of the country. About 6,000 birds have died there since April, the report said.

Writing in the journal Science, one of the teams said the discovery has the potential to be a global threat as the lake is a breeding center for migrant birds from Siberia, Australia and New Zealand. The other team wrote in Nature the discovery was a particular threat to India, which has not so far been affected by H5N1, the Times said.

Copyright 2005 by United Press International

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study, research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.