

Goat Flu Epidemic Reported in Netherlands

Submitted by [Deborah Mitchell](#) on Dec 12th, 2009

Following on the heels of bird flu and swine flu, there are now reports from the Netherlands of an outbreak of goat flu. Online news sources report that up to 2,300 people have been infected by goat flu and that six individuals have died of the disease.

Goat flu, also known as Q fever or Q flu, affects both goats and sheep. It is caused by bacteria called *Coxiella burnetii*, which are released when pregnant goats or sheep experience a spontaneous abortion. The bacteria spread very easily according to experts.

The Dutch Ministry of Agriculture has confirmed that the virus has been detected at 55 to 350 Dutch farms, with the most affected areas being the cities of Eindhoven and Tilburg. According to the *Dutch News*, agriculture ministers announced on Wednesday afternoon at a news conference that they will begin culling herds of goats. The unofficial number of animals to be killed is between 15,000 and 20,000, mainly goats, to help prevent further spread of the disease. All infected sheep and goats that have been vaccinated will be slaughtered, as will all pregnant goats and sheep on farms where the disease has been identified.

Symptoms of goat flu include severe headache, chills, perspiration, aching muscles, diarrhea, slow pulse, and general illness. The acute version of the disease lasts for up to 14 days, but individuals who get a chronic type may have the disease for up to two years. In the chronic version, fatigue is the main symptom. The disease can also cause lung and heart problems.

All of the six individuals who died of goat flu had other health problems. At this point, there are no recorded cases of transmission of goat flu infection from person to person. A spokesperson from the public health institute RIVM, Roel Coutinho, told *Trouw* that the goat flu epidemic may be the result of an aggressive goat farming initiative in the Netherlands. In 1995, there were 7,600 goats in the country, but today there are more than 350,000. Unfortunately, the flu epidemic is about to change those numbers significantly.

<http://www.emaxhealth.com/1275/90/34758/goat-flu-epidemic-reported-netherlands.html>