

# Taiwan official quits over 'bird flu cover up'

**TAIPEI:** A top Taiwan agriculture official stepped down amid allegations he covered up bird flu outbreaks, a day after authorities said they had culled thousands of chickens.

Hsu Tien-lai, the chief of the Bureau of Animal and Plant Health Inspection and Quarantine had tendered his resignation, Council of Agriculture spokesman Wang Cheng-taung told.

Hsu was accused in a documentary of covering up outbreaks of H5N2 bird flu, a less virulent strain of the virus.

Wang insisted that the "approval of Hsu's resignation is not an indication that he had 'covered up' the flu outbreak", adding that the accusations would be investigated.

Wang also confirmed Taiwan's poultry exports would be suspended for at least three months, with an estimated loss of up to NT\$600mil (RM60.89mil) this year.

Hsu's unit confirmed on Saturday that nearly 58,000 chickens had been culled at two farms on the island following the latest outbreak, most of them at a farm in central Changhua county. — AFP