

U.C.R. EDITOR'S NOTE: Khabarovsk, east to Kamchatka, and north to Chukotka are the Holy Grail for falcon trappers, who are searching for rare white Gyrfalcons to smuggle to Arabia. Trapping these Gyrfalcons entails:

(1) importing substandard farm falcons from the Middle East, for use as "Nigil", or live bait to catch valuable wild falcons, and (2) housing large numbers of domestic bait-pigeons -- very often imported from the Middle East into Russia's arctic regions, where pigeons are not native. These imported pigeons are maintained in cramped, unsanitary quarters.

Such conditions are favorable to exporting Avian Influenza and Newcastle disease from the Arabian Gulf, where these Avian diseases are endemic -- into Russian Siberia, where there is little recorded history regarding both diseases.

Hundreds of farm falcons and pigeons are annually exported from Arab countries, to points north for use as live lures. Further study must be undertaken to determine if there is linkage between Avian disease outbreaks in China, Central Asia, and Russia -- and diseased birds originating from the Arabian Gulf.

Please visit [www.SaveTheFalcons.org](http://www.SaveTheFalcons.org) for more information.

## Health

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### Newcastle disease affects wild birds in Russian Far East



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VLADIVOSTOK, Russia (AFP) - A growing number of wild birds in the Russian Far East region of Khabarovsk are catching an acute viral disease known as Newcastle disease, a local expert said.

Birds of several species, including grouse, were rarely sighted there now because so many were dying from the disease, Leonid Ivanov, a local official responsible for combatting the virus, told AFP.

"Tests show that the Newcastle disease virus is not only circulating in wild species but also among pet birds and pigeons," he said.

Ivanov added that Newcastle disease, or pneumoencephalitis, could prove just as devastating for poultry stocks as bird flu, which has led to the culling of millions of chickens worldwide. The two diseases produce similar symptoms.

The health authorities in Khabarovsk have urged poultry farmers to have their birds vaccinated.

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