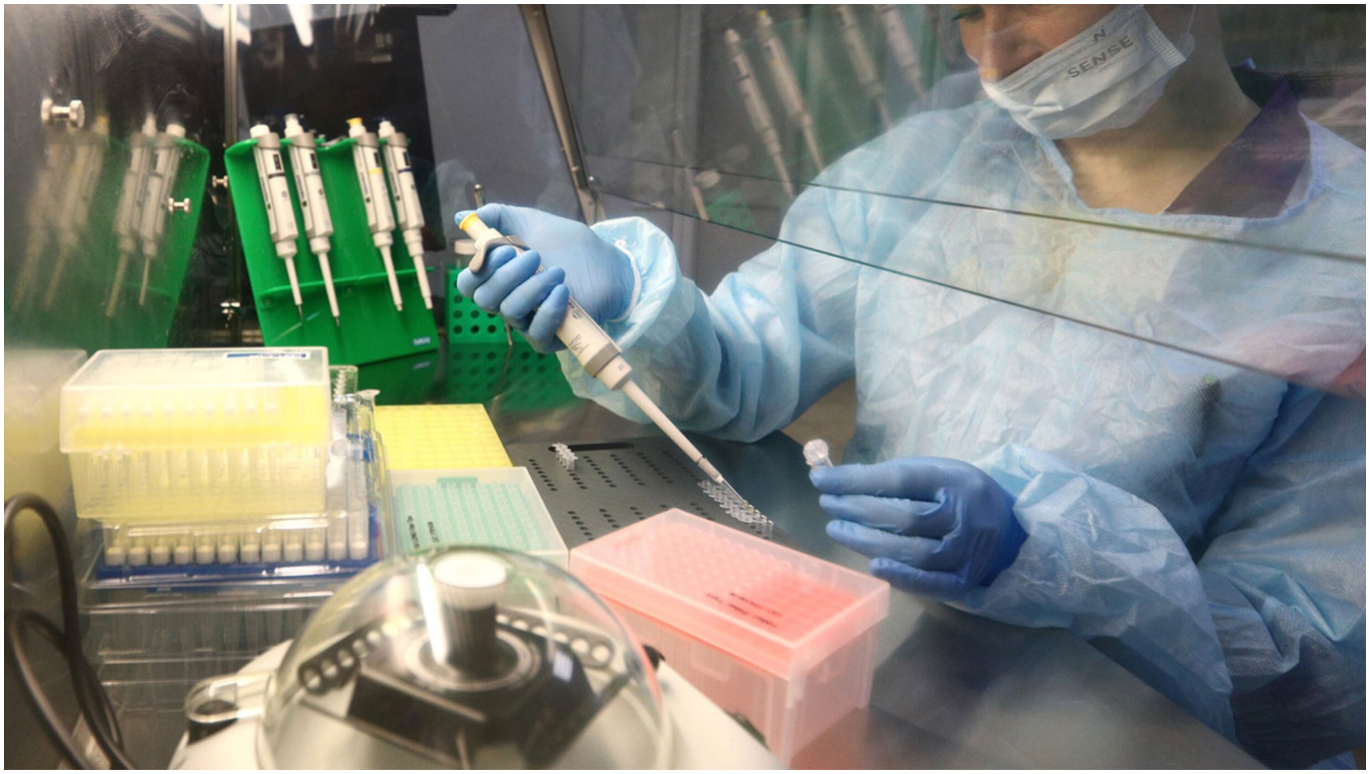
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3 Anthrax Cases Confirmed in Central Russia

March 22, 2023



Kirill Zykov / Moskva News Agency

Authorities in the agricultural heartland of central Russia are bracing for the spread of anthrax after a rash of three cases were registered there in recent days, according to state media.

Two people were hospitalized with anthrax symptoms in the republic of Chuvashia 600 kilometers east of Moscow last Wednesday. Authorities quarantined the village of Staroye Aktashevo where the patients live.

This Wednesday, the regional Health Ministry in Chuvashia confirmed a third anthrax case while monitoring activities the 130 people who had come into contact with the first two patients, the RBC news website reported.

The regional agricultural watchdog has said the likely source of the infection was the illegal slaughter of unregistered livestock that were allegedly unvaccinated and fed with grain of unknown origin.

The republic of Chuvashia's Health Ministry said last week it planned to speed up purchases of anthrax vaccines after the first cases hit the region.

Later Wednesday, a man was hospitalized in the Moscow region with a suspected anthrax infection, the state-run RIA Novosti news agency reported, citing local health officials. The man was said to have arrived in the Moscow region from Chuvashia.

Anthrax is a bacterial infection that can be transmitted to humans through ingestion, inhalation or direct contact with anthrax spores — and cause a form of pneumonia.

Since it is most commonly transmitted through exposure to infected animals, those who work with livestock and animal products are at higher risk of infection.

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