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Farmers Flock to Moscow Demanding Putin Put a Stop to Mass Culling of Cattle

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A group of farmers gather outside a government building in Moscow. **@Govorit_NeMoskva / Telegram**

Farmers from five Russian regions were in Moscow on Tuesday to demand that President Vladimir Putin halt the mass culling of livestock ordered by authorities.

More than 90,000 head of cattle have been culled across at least nine regions since February, drawing widespread attention in Russia. Farmers estimate their losses at 1.59 billion rubles ($19.5 million), with additional damages of 368.2 million rubles ($4.5 million).

Officials have linked the culling to outbreaks of rabies and pasteurellosis, a bacterial infection. The cases have been described as complex and involving additional unidentified illnesses.

However, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's foreign service has suggested the scale of the culling could indicate a possible unconfirmed outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease.

An activist group called the "All-Russian Agrarian Council" said Tuesday it had submitted a

petition signed by more than 31,000 people urging Putin to stop the culling and investigate officials who ordered them.

“We were assured that they would look into it and provide help… We hope damages will be fully compensated so that people have the strength to revive their farms,” a group of farmers from the Novosibirsk region said.

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The petition also calls for Russia’s withdrawal from the World Trade Organization amid claims by Novosibirsk region officials that their response followed “American and European protocols.”

The Novosibirsk farmers were joined by others from the northwestern Arkhangelsk region, the southwestern Volgograd region, the Omsk region near the border with Kazakhstan and the republic of Udmurtia.

Authorities in the Novosibirsk region have said the outbreak was caused by an “unusual mutated form” of pasteurellosis. The bacterial infection is typically treatable with antibiotics, raising questions among farmers about why entire herds were culled instead of quarantined.

Farmers in affected areas say animals were slaughtered without testing, including those that appeared healthy.

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