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Novosibirsk Agriculture Minister Fired After Mass Cattle Culls Spark Farmer Protests

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Andrei Shindelov. **mcx.nso.ru**

The agriculture minister of the Novosibirsk region was dismissed on Monday following a mass cattle cull that triggered rare public protests and significant financial losses for local farmers.

Novosibirsk region Governor Andrei Travnikov announced the firing of Andrei Shindelov during a government meeting, citing "low veterinary safety" and the entry of "dangerous animal diseases" into the region for the first time in decades.

Since February, around 90,000 cattle have been culled across nine Russian regions. In Novosibirsk alone, analysts estimate half of the 6,800 cattle on affected farms were slaughtered, resulting in losses exceeding 235 million rubles ($3.1 million).

Shindelov, who took office in August 2024, became the target of national ridicule last month

after a video showed him running away from a farm owner seeking an explanation for the culling.

A successor to Shindelov is expected to be named on Thursday.

While Russian officials blamed the cattle losses on rabies and an "unusual mutated form" of pasteurellosis, the scale of the cull has raised suspicions. Farmers have questioned why entire herds were destroyed rather than quarantined, as pasteurellosis is typically treatable with antibiotics.

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The U.S. Department of Agriculture's foreign service suggested the culls may actually be a response to an unconfirmed outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease, a highly contagious and often fatal virus. That theory gained traction after Kazakhstan recently banned imports of Russian meat and livestock.

Russia's agriculture watchdog dismissed the allegation.

The World Organization for Animal Health currently recognizes Russia as free of foot-and-mouth disease. Losing that status would likely cripple the country's international livestock and meat exports.

Veterinary authorities in Novosibirsk expect to lift local quarantines by late April, with plans to begin restocking herds three months later.

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