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MORE THAN 130,000 HENS SLAUGHTERED AMID SPANISH BIRD FLU OUTBREAK

Madrid.—Spanish authorities have slaughtered more than 130,000 hens after an outbreak of bird flu was detected at an intensive farming operation in the northern region of Castile and Leon, local officials said. An industrial loader scooped up chicken carcasses by the thousand and dumped them into an open-topped truck, which took them to a burn site outside the farm, images provided by Greenpeace showed yesterday.

“The appropriate measures of slaughtering and disposing of the remains of all the animals have been taken on the farm, which remains isolated,” the local veterinarians’ association said in a statement on Thursday.

Authorities have imposed an isolation area of 10 kilometres around the farm, which lies just outside the village of Iscar in the province of Valladolid, roughly 130 km (81 miles) northwest of Madrid, but say there is little danger to humans.

“The possibility of transfer to humans is extraordinarily rare and therefore not a matter of great concern to us,” Castile and Leon’s regional government spokesman Carlos Fernandez Carriedo said.

Outbreaks of the virus, which is often transmitted by wild migratory birds to domestic animals, have been reported in France, Germany, Britain, the Netherlands and Serbia.

HAPPY FAMILIES



● The interior ministry yesterday posted a resolution in the Official Bulletin of State which says that from midnight on February 14, travellers under 18 from the UK will no longer need **to have the complete vaccination schedule** and will only need to present a negative **PCR test carried out 72 hours before arrival**.

By Andrew Ede
Madrid.—Spain will no longer require UK teenagers to present proof of double vaccination in order to enter the country.

The interior ministry yesterday posted a resolution in the Official Bulletin of State which says that from midnight on February 14, travellers under 18 from the UK will no longer need to have the complete vaccination schedule and will only need to present a negative PCR test carried out 72 hours before arrival.

The ministry’s statement adds that vaccination is a key instrument for combatting the COVID-19 pandemic.

In order to promote vaccination and

to link this to facilitating international mobility, it was included as one of the categories exempt from restrictions.

“However, in many countries there are difficulties or even the impossibility of obtaining the vaccine for use in the population under 18 years of age. Consequently, it is considered appropriate to establish specific conditions for these people.”

Spain’s health minister, Carolina Darias, said earlier this week that the government was working on a “solution” to what had clearly become a serious problem for Spain’s tourism, especially in the Canaries, where it is high season.

Further pressure mounted on the

government to change the rule when Spanish media made a great deal of a BBC report into the effects of the vaccination rule on British family holidaymakers.

Responding to Friday’s resolution by the interior ministry, the president of the CEHAT national confederation of hotel associations, Jorge Marichal, a fierce critic of the rule, said that it had led to a loss of business and of brand image. “It was not generating confidence in the UK market.”

Marichal said that the hotel industry fully understands the motivation behind regulations to deal with the pandemic. “However, common sense must prevail at all times and

we must be flexible in the application and modification of regulations in order to avoid unnecessary damage.” The confederation estimates that some 400 million euros of business have been lost.

The CEHAT president called for the Spanish government to conduct a “flash campaign to recover all the market that we have lost”.

To this end, he wants the government to get in immediate contact with the British authorities and Spain’s Tourism Bureau in London to contact all tour operators and media in the UK in order to try and reactivate demand from what is historically Spain’s largest tourism market.



New dawn for the Balearic tourist industry: See Page 3