

Cattle, Hog Ban Due to Virus Fear

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Russia will ban shipments of Europe's cattle and hogs from March 20 due to an outbreak of the Schmallenberg virus, which causes birth deformities, said the Federal Service for Veterinary and Phytosanitary Surveillance, the country's food-safety watchdog.

The European Union has 1,342 confirmed cases of the virus, which affects animals, the British National Beef Association said in an e-mailed report Feb. 29. There are no known reports of the virus in Russia, Alexei Alexeyenko, the Federal Service for Veterinary and Phytosanitary Surveillance's spokesman, said by phone Friday.

The Schmallenberg virus is named after the German city near where it was first identified in November. It was probably spread by biting midges last year, infecting pregnant sheep, cows and goats, according to Germany's Federal Research Institute for Animal Health, which discovered it.

Russia will allow imports of pedigree cattle from Europe under "strengthened veterinary control," the Federal Service for Veterinary and Phytosanitary Surveillance said, after

announcing the ban.

The watchdog has asked officials from the European Commission's Directorate General for Health and Consumers to meet in Moscow to discuss the export issue, Alexeyenko said. He declined to give European import numbers.

The virus is unlikely to cause disease in humans, though it cannot be excluded, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control wrote in a Dec. 22 report.

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