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# INDEPENDENT

Home News, UK

## Fears bird flu could ruin Christmas dinner this year

'It's like Covid -it's so endemic now that it's pointless shutting it down, it's everywhere'

George Mathias

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A turkey farmer says she won't be selling produce this Christmas over "rampant" [bird flu](#) fears.

Organic poultry seller Charlotte Blackler, 49, runs an artisanal farm and normally sells 200 organic, free-range turkeys in the run up to Christmas.

However this year she has decided for the first time to not raise any turkeys due to bird flu, which has forced farmers to take drastic measures to halt virus spread.

Other suppliers have taken other measures in a bid to make sure they aren't facing a Christmas shortage.

According to Charlotte, her usual supplier who she buys chicks from has had four of his largest producers pull out, with orders dropping from 700 to just 50.

It has been speculated turkey supplies could take a big hit come Christmas, especially turkeys produced by small and independent suppliers.

Charlotte, who runs food supplier Herb Majesty in Glenalmond, Perthshire, a favourite with Michelin star restaurants and hotels, said: "We felt as though the risk was too big this year to rear turkeys.

"It's like [Covid](#) -it's so endemic now that it's pointless shutting it down, it's everywhere."

Charlotte, whose farm prides itself on rearing animals without hormones and pesticides, said: "I have been agonising over raising turkeys this year and finally made the decision not to go ahead.

"It would go against our ethics to have the birds living their whole lives without access to our herby pastures, fruits and berries.

"Bird flu is so rampant around here, different areas are affected differently, but I do feel like the scale of the problem isn't being understood."

Charlotte said she could not speak for larger suppliers, but believes smaller suppliers of turkeys will be

massively impacted.

“My customers were very sad to hear of the news,” she said.

“I don’t know on a grander scale whether this will affect people in terms of ordering turkeys around Christmas.

“There are still tens of thousands birds produced by commercial producers -I imagine they will still be fine.

“But maybe perhaps the steps we have taken is something all suppliers, especially smaller ones, should be considering.”

Tom Lomas from the Greendale Farm Shop near Exeter says their business spent £100,000 converting a shed to house turkeys, in part due to a potential bird flu outbreak which could theoretically create a shortage.

Tom said: “We want to be in control of our own destiny in case of a shortfall so decided to rear our own turkeys.

“We have 600 turkeys in, and they are all free range, and far from a scare, our orders have actually gone up.

“We did this in part as a precaution against bird flu, but we also liked the idea of being in control of the situation ourselves and controlling our own destiny.”

But not everyone is worried about a potential shortage.

Mike Dalton from M J Dalton butchers, based in Bristol, said: “There’s always talk of bird flu, we’ve heard about it every year for the past 15 years.

“I think it’s a load on nonsense -probably started by some vegan somewhere.”

The National Farmers’ Union said: “As far as we understand there won’t be a shortage of turkeys this Christmas.”

Earlier this month Scientists said they used gene-editing techniques to identify and change parts of chicken DNA that could limit the spread of the virus.

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