

Markets



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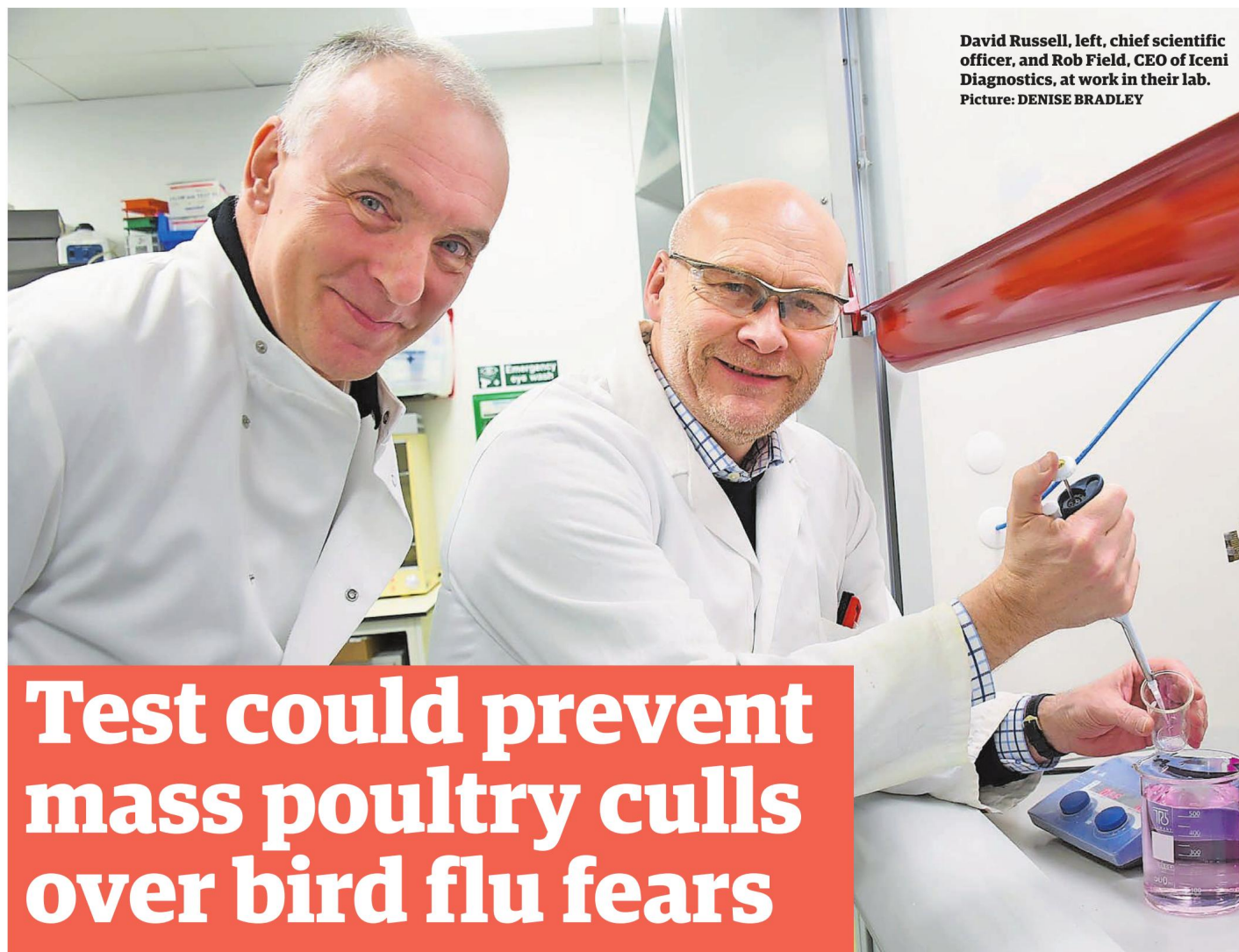


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business



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David Russell, left, chief scientific officer, and Rob Field, CEO of Iceni Diagnostics, at work in their lab. Picture: DENISE BRADLEY

Test could prevent mass poultry culls over bird flu fears

Precautionary mass culls of poultry could be ended by a simple test being developed by an East Anglian firm, which has been given a £60,000 funding boost for the project.

Future50 business Iceni Diagnostics is working on a device to detect avian flu quickly, to help farmers identify infection among chickens, turkeys and geese – reducing the need for mass culls.

The threat of bird-flu to producers across the East is well documented and this has led New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to give the project a £60,000 agri-tech grant.

In recent years highly pathogenic H5N1 and H5N8 avian influenza strains have been

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reported in poultry.

There have been reports outside the UK of the virus crossing to humans and so authorities immediately cull whole flocks whether the birds are infected or not. In February 2017 the H5N8 strain was discovered at a poultry farm in Redgrave, Suffolk where 23,000 birds were culled and a further 55,000 birds culled after the virus was identified at a nearby duck unit. The country's most recent case in poultry was confirmed in Norfolk on June 3, when an outbreak hit a small back-yard flock in Diss.

Iceni Diagnostics, based on Norwich Research Park, is designing a hand-held device which can be used by an on-farm veterinarian. It uses a carbohydrate to latch on to the strain of the virus and give an instant diagnosis without having to send samples to a laboratory.

As well as its speed, the new diagnostic technique has the added advantage that it is effective on new strains of the virus as they emerge.

Professor Rob Field, co-founder and chief executive of Iceni Diagnostics, said: "We are delighted to receive this support to develop a novel avian influenza

diagnostics product that will help the East Anglian farming community."

Doug Field, chairman of New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership, said: "The new

technology being developed by Iceni Diagnostics could have a profound impact on the poultry industry here in the East and indeed worldwide. It is yet another example of the quality of research taking place in our life sciences

sector, and one which has the potential to provide high-value jobs in the future."

Iceni Diagnostics won the Knowledge Catalyst category at the EDP Business Awards 2017.



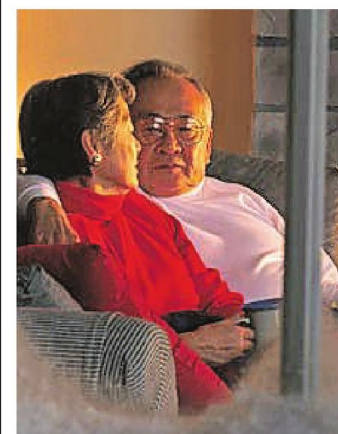
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