# Concerns rise over zoonotic outbreaks following human flu found in pigs



Concerns over potential zoonotic outbreaks have escalated following the identification of the UK's first incident of 'reverse zoonosis', where human flu was found in a factory-farmed pig. This marked a significant finding, taking place at a pig farm in Northern Ireland, and was revealed through government surveillance documents.

The implications of this discovery come alongside an increasing call from global health experts to reassess the treatment of animals in farming and trade practices. Dale Vince, founder of the Green Britain Foundation, expressed apprehension regarding the potential for these diseases to incite a new pandemic. "We've seen bird flu in humans and now buried in a government report we’ve found evidence of human flu in pigs for the first time. How long will we wait before these preventable diseases trigger another pandemic? We need to overhaul our relationship with animals and radically rethink our food systems," Vince stated.

Health experts are sounding alarms about the conditions in factory farms and wet markets, which they argue create ideal environments for the emergence of novel diseases. Reports indicate that factory farming practices, often characterised by high-density indoor populations, facilitate rapid viral and bacterial transmission among large groups of animals. Dr Ben Garrod, a Professor of Evolutionary Biology and Science Engagement at the University of East Anglia, explained that these environments can lead to the rapid development of diseases capable of mutating to cross species barriers, thereby posing risks to human health. "It’s a biological time bomb just waiting to go off," he remarked.

With the outbreak of COVID-19 having previously raised awareness of the relationship between animal welfare and human health, discussions surrounding the fur trade and its implications have also intensified. Dr Hope Ferdowsian from the University of New Mexico School of Medicine, alongside other experts, has urged for a ban on fur exports in the UK as a precautionary measure against future pandemic outbreaks. She elaborated on the need to address the risks posed by fur farming, reinforcing that such practices currently exist as potential conduits for zoonotic disease emergence.

The concern surrounding wildlife trading practices extends beyond fur to illegal bushmeat trade, which not only threatens species such as primates but also presents a significant risk for the emergence of new zoonotic diseases. The impact of illegal wildlife trade is particularly pronounced in expatriate communities in cities like London and New York, where demand for traditional animal parts persists.

Sonul Badiani-Hamment, Country Director for FOUR PAWS UK, echoed the sentiments of other experts, stating that the ongoing presence of intensive farms and wet markets continues unchecked, thereby resulting in a potential health crisis in the making. "The evidence is clear: when animals suffer, humans suffer. To break this dangerous cycle, we must end all involvement in and association with high-risk industries," Badiani-Hamment highlighted.

In light of these findings, officials from the Animal and Plant Health Authority have reassured the public that the risk to human health remains low, noting that this incident underlines the necessity of robust surveillance regarding viruses that can transmit between humans and animals. Their response indicated an ongoing commitment to monitoring and managing potential health risks associated with animal farming practices.

As Parliament deliberates a Bill proposing to reinstate a ban on the importation and sale of fur, the discussions not only reflect concerns over aesthetic choices but highlight broader implications for global health. The controversial status of animal farming practices will likely remain a focal point within public health discussions as experts continue to advocate for significant reform in animal welfare and agricultural policies.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.instagram.com/therealdalevince/reel/DII1ySipYfY/> - This URL mentions the first case of reverse zoonosis involving human flu in a pig in Northern Ireland, as highlighted by Dale Vince. It supports the claim about the discovery's significance in raising concerns over zoonotic diseases.
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/animal-and-plant-health-agency-apha-guidance-and-policy> - This URL provides general information on the Animal and Plant Health Agency's policies, which might include surveillance and management practices related to zoonotic diseases. It supports the aspect of government surveillance and monitoring.
* <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-and-a/detail/zoonoses> - This URL from the World Health Organization (WHO) discusses zoonotic diseases, highlighting the risks associated with animal-human interactions, particularly in environments like factory farms and wet markets.
* <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-022-03294-x> - This article discusses the role of factory farming in the emergence and spread of zoonotic diseases, supporting the claims about these environments facilitating rapid viral transmission and potential pandemics.
* <https://www.iucn.org/theme/wildlife-trade> - This URL addresses the illegal wildlife trade, including bushmeat, and its impact on species and potential risks for zoonotic disease emergence, aligning with the concerns about wildlife trading practices.
* <https://legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023> - This URL provides a general resource for UK legislation, which could include bills related to animal welfare and public health. It supports discussions around legislative actions, such as the proposed ban on fur imports.
* <https://www.nottinghampost.com/news/health/first-uk-case-reverse-zoonosis-10086097> - Please view link - unable to able to access data