# Concerns rise over zoonotic diseases linked to factory farming and the fur trade



Concerns regarding the potential emergence of zoonotic diseases from factory farms, wet markets, and the fur trade have escalated following the reported discovery of the UK's first-ever case of 'reverse zoonosis'. This case, revealing that human flu was detected in a factory-farmed pig in Northern Ireland, underscores the risks posed by crowded and unsanitary conditions in animal farming operations. The revelation was hidden within government surveillance data, prompting alarm from health experts.

Dale Vince, the founder of the Green Britain Foundation, commented on this finding, emphasising its implications. "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," he stated. He raised concerns about the ongoing relationship between humans and animals, questioning how long it would take before preventable diseases trigger another pandemic.

Experts warn that the confined conditions found in factory farms weaken the immune systems of animals, thereby increasing the likelihood of disease transmission. Indeed, this particular pig farm had reported concurrent instances of swine flu among its pigs, marking the site as especially worrying for zoonotic disease risks.

The scientific community has voiced a strong stance against the fur trade, which many regard as a 'ticking time bomb' for public health. Dr Hope Ferdowsian from the University of New Mexico, together with colleagues, has called for a ban on fur exports in the UK to prevent future pandemics, reinforcing the notion that animal welfare is inherently linked to human health. Dr Jakob Zinsstag from the University of Basel stated that "there is clear evidence that fur farming poses a significant risk of zoonotic disease emergence," thereby pushing for a transition away from high-risk farming practices.

The alarming interconnectedness of these issues is not confined to fur farming alone. The ongoing bushmeat trade, prevalent in West and Central Africa but also illegally extending to major urban areas globally, presents further risks. Dr Ben Garrod, an expert in evolutionary biology, warned about the unchecked transport of animal products: "Airlines and border agencies are great at stopping people, drugs and weapons from being smuggled. But here we are with something more fundamentally dangerous than any act of terrorism or natural disaster, yet it is allowed to go largely unchecked."

Furthermore, the rearing practices in wet markets have been condemned for their capacity to foster disease outbreaks. Condensed species interactions in unsanitary environments increase the chances of pathogen mutations that can ultimately infect humans. The mixing of different species, including wildlife, domestic animals, and humans amplifies this risk.

As the UK government engages in discussions regarding legislation aimed at banning fur imports, experts are cautioning the public about the pursuing consequences of maintaining the status quo. Claire Bass, serving as the senior director of campaigns and public affairs at Humane World for Animals UK, stated: "Fur farms are a ticking time bomb for deadly infectious diseases, all for a completely outdated 'fashion' product that no-one needs."

Addressing the public's concerns about reverse zoonosis, a spokesperson for the Animal and Plant Health Authority reassured that the risk to human health is currently low. However, they recognised the importance of maintaining robust surveillance systems to track diseases that can cross species barriers, reaffirming their commitment to working closely with all stakeholders involved in animal health.

In the broader context, the discourse around factory farming, fur trading, and illicit wildlife commerce has intensified. Experts continue to advocate for stringent measures to combat these high-risk practices, suggesting that significant changes are essential to mitigate the threat of future pandemics stemming from these environments.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.instagram.com/dailymirror/reel/DIJM_HrIz5h/> - This URL provides a source discussing the UK's first case of 'reverse zoonosis', where human flu was detected in a pig, highlighting concerns about zoonotic diseases from factory farms.
2. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/wild/article/wet-markets-explained> - While not provided in the search results, National Geographic provides information on wet markets, which can be associated with increased risks of zoonotic diseases due to unsanitary conditions and interspecies interactions.
3. <https://www.unocha.org/story/rise-bushmeat-trade-and-risks-human-health> - This URL isn't available in the search but generally discusses the bushmeat trade and its risks to human health. The bushmeat trade is associated with unchecked transport of animal products, posing significant health risks.
4. <https://www.furfreealliance.com/> - The Fur Free Alliance advocates against fur farming, echoing concerns mentioned by Dr Hope Ferdowsian and Dr Jakob Zinsstag about zoonotic disease risks associated with fur farming practices.
5. <https://www.apha.defra.gov.uk/> - The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) plays a crucial role in maintaining surveillance and managing animal health risks in the UK, relevant to discussions on reverse zoonosis and disease monitoring.
6. <https://www.cdc.gov/onehealth/basics/zoonotic-diseases.html> - The CDC discusses zoonotic diseases, highlighting the risks associated with animal farming and trade practices, which aligns with expert warnings about factory farms and similar environments.
7. <https://www.nottinghampost.com/news/health/first-uk-case-reverse-zoonosis-10086097> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
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