# Health experts alarmed by first case of reverse zoonosis in the UK



Health experts are increasingly expressing alarm over the potential emergence of zoonotic diseases in the UK, following the revelation of the first instance of "reverse zoonosis" recorded in the country. This unprecedented case involved the detection of human flu within a factory-farmed pig on a farm in Northern Ireland, a finding revealed in government surveillance documents and reported by the Mirror.

The term 'reverse zoonosis' refers to the transfer of diseases from humans to animals, a phenomenon that raises significant public health concerns. The affected Northern Irish pig farm has concurrently reported cases of swine flu in its swine population, heightening anxieties about the potential for viruses to spread within animal populations and revert to humans.

Dale Vince, founder of the Green Britain Foundation, commented on the serious implications of this discovery, stating, "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?" His remarks highlight an urgent call for a fundamental reevaluation of human-animal interactions and agricultural practices.

The revelation has invigorated calls for an end to the fur trade and stricter regulations on animal farming practices, which health specialists describe as "ticking time bombs" for viral outbreaks. Dr Hope Ferdowsian from the University of New Mexico School of Medicine was part of a panel urging UK MPs to ban fur exports, citing the industry's potential threats to public health. Dr Jakob Zinsstag from the University of Basel echoed these sentiments, noting that fur farming presents significant risks of zoonotic disease emergence.

The concerns extend beyond fur farming to include factory farming in general, where large numbers of animals are kept in close quarters, often under unhygienic conditions. Experts contend that such environments can facilitate the rapid transmission of diseases among livestock. Dr Ben Garrod, a Professor at the University of East Anglia, reiterated this point, highlighting how these "biological time bombs" are exacerbated by mixing wild and domestic species.

In addition to the fur trade and factory farming, health professionals are cautioning against the dangers posed by wet markets and the illegal wildlife trade, citing specific locations in Africa and Asia where wildlife is sold in unsanitary conditions. The bushmeat trade, prominent in West and Central Africa, not only threatens wildlife populations but also risks introducing new zoonotic diseases into human populations. Sonul Badiani-Hamment, FOUR PAWS UK Country Director, expressed concern over the ongoing operations of wet markets and intensive farms, stating, "The evidence is clear: when animals suffer, humans suffer."

While the Animal and Plant Health Authority has attempted to alleviate public concern by declaring that the risk to human health remains low in light of the reported case of reverse zoonosis, the spokesperson acknowledged the necessity of ongoing surveillance and research into viruses that can transmit between humans and animals.

In the context of public health and agricultural practices, this incident has brought forth a renewed emphasis on the need for robust measures to mitigate potential outbreaks and re-evaluate interactions between humans and animals. As the UK Parliament deliberates legislation that could impose a ban on fur imports, the implications of these discussions might set a precedent for future regulations aimed at enhancing public health and managing zoonotic disease risks.

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

## References

* <https://www.instagram.com/dailymirror/reel/DIJM_HrIz5h/> - This URL supports the claim of the first 'reverse zoonosis' case in the UK, where human flu was detected in a pig on a farm in Northern Ireland, raising concerns about zoonotic diseases.
* <https://www.greenbritainfoundation.com/> - This URL could provide information about Dale Vince's Green Britain Foundation and its stance on zoonotic diseases, though a specific link to his comments on 'reverse zoonosis' may not be available.
* <https://www.unm.edu/> - While not directly related to Dr. Hope Ferdowsian's specific comments, this URL points to the University of New Mexico, her affiliated institution, which might offer insights into her work on public health and zoonotic diseases.
* <https://www.unibas.ch/en/University/Profile/Departments-and-Faculties/Faculty-of-Science/Departments/Biology/Profile/People/Staff/Zinsstag-Jakob.html> - This link mentions Dr. Jakob Zinsstag of the University of Basel, who has commented on the risks associated with fur farming in relation to zoonotic diseases.
* <https://www.uea.ac.uk/> - This URL points to the University of East Anglia, which is the institution associated with Dr. Ben Garrod, who has highlighted the risks of diseases in factory farming environments.
* <https://four-paws.org.uk/> - This URL supports the mention of FOUR PAWS UK and its concerns about the dangers posed by wet markets and the illegal wildlife trade, as expressed by Sonul Badiani-Hamment.
* <https://www.nottinghampost.com/news/health/first-uk-case-reverse-zoonosis-10086097> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
* <https://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/uk-world-news/uk-suffers-first-ever-case-31368183> - Please view link - unable to able to access data