

NEWS RELEASE



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Compassion in World Farming warns that intensive pig farming is a breeding ground for new and dangerous strains of disease

Compassion in World Farming, the world's leading international charity for farm animal welfare, is backing calls from Caroline Lucas MEP for a thorough investigation to be carried out into allegations that industrial pig farms are the source of the swine flu outbreak in Mexico.

Philip LyMBERy, Chief Executive of Compassion in World Farming says:

“Although it is too early to know for sure where this latest virus has come from, it makes sense to question the wisdom of large scale factory farming of animals, which surely provides an ideal pressure-cooker breeding ground for new and dangerous strains of disease.

“If factory pig farming is proved to be the source of the current H1N1 flu outbreak, then it will become even more urgent that countries around the world abandon industrial farming practices that are seriously harming animals, people and the environment.”

In a letter sent today to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), Compassion in World Farming said:

“Intensive pig farms provide the optimum conditions for viral mutation and transmission, with thousands of pigs crowded together in a closed, warm and dusty environment, highly conducive to the transmission of a contagious disease. The risks arising from disposal of large quantities of excreta and other waste from an infected premises is also significantly increased in farms with large pig populations - particularly where slurry lagoons are accessible to wild animals, birds and flies or where the waste disposal may contaminate local water courses.”

Notes to the Editors

Health risks associated with intensive pig farming

The FAO's own 2007 report on *Industrial Livestock Production and Global Health Risks* shows that industrial livestock production plays an important part in the emergence of highly pathogenic influenza and other diseases. The paper notes that "Industrial pig and poultry production with its geographic intensity and being coincident for the two species, and with the regular movement of animals between production stages provides significant opportunities for interactions between large populations of confined poultry and/or pigs and thus **has potential consequences for the development and transmission of some zoonotic disease agents.**"

"The proximity of thousands of confined animals increases the likelihood of transfer of pathogens within and between these populations, with consequent impacts on rates of pathogen evolution". The report also refers to the US Council for Agriculture, Science and Technology which has warned that a major consequence of modern industrial livestock production systems is that they potentially allow the rapid selection and amplification of pathogens. http://www.fao.org/ag/AGInfo/projects/en/pplpi/docarc/rep-hpai_industrialisationrisks.pdf

Welfare issues associated with intensive pig farming

Around 1.3 billion pigs are slaughtered annually for meat worldwide. The majority of these are in East Asia, particularly China, which rears half of the world's pigs. This is followed by the EU, North America and Brazil. The majority of pigs are reared for meat and a smaller number are kept for breeding.

At least half of the world's pig meat is produced from intensive systems. In these systems, pregnant sows are often confined in narrow crates, unable to move freely. The piglets reared for meat, are often mutilated, without anaesthetic, and kept in dimly lit concrete sheds without bedding.

http://www.ciwf.org.uk/farm_animals/pigs/welfare_issues/default.aspx

For photos and video footage of intensively farmed pigs or to set up an interview with Compassion in World Farming, contact Valentina Moressa on 01483 521952 or 07771 926 005 (out of office hours) or email valentina@ciwf.org