



## Alert: Ban Factory Farms Spreading Deadly Flu

Despite years of warnings by public interest organizations such as the OCA and the US Humane Society, new evidence indicates drugged-out animals on intensive confinement factory farms are incubating deadly viruses that could set off a deadly epidemic. A dangerous and rapidly spreading strain of influenza, which combines genetic material from pigs, birds and humans in a way researchers have not seen before, has killed over 150 people in Mexico, infecting thousands, and has spread to over a dozen countries.

The World Health Organization warned early this week that the outbreak could reach global pandemic levels and raised the threat level to 4 (with 6 being the highest pandemic alert level). The last major global pandemic, the 1918 flu epidemic, killed 20-50 million people.

Despite company denials, a number of news outlets are pointing to Virginia-based Smithfield Foods, the world's largest pig producer (\$12 billion in annual sales), as a likely source of the deadly outbreak. Smithfield sells pork and operates massive hog-raising operations in 40 nations, including Perote, Mexico, in the state of Veracruz, where the outbreak originated. For months, local residents and workers in Mexico have complained of pollution, contamination, and illnesses from the Smithfield plant. For years, Smithfield has been criticized in the US for polluting rural communities, endangering public health, and exploiting workers and farmers. CAFOs, such as Smithfield, cram thousands of pigs together inside unhygienic disease-ridden factory farms, injecting pigs with powerful vaccines to keep them alive, thereby putting enormous pressure on swine viruses to evolve into more virulent pathogens such as the H1N1 virus. In the case of Smithfield's million pig operation in Veracruz, Mexico (as in many regions in North America, Asia, and across the world), massive poultry operations located nearby these pig CAFOs incubate bird viruses that can then recombine with swine viruses, as well as human flu viruses, endemic among typically exploited and unhealthy pig and poultry workers.

Filthy and disease-ridden factory farms for pigs and chickens, maintained by exploited and often unhealthy farm workers, kept in operation only with massive injections of animal drugs, are a biological time bomb set to explode. Hopefully the current H1N1 Swine Flu epidemic will not kill millions of us. Unfortunately scientists warn us that it is not a question of if, but rather when, a future swine/bird/human virus will kill millions—unless we shut down the CAFOs and transform the current insane global industrial/factory farm agriculture system into a chemical and drug-free organic system, whereby local and regional organic farms produce healthy food for local and regional markets.

Take action at OCA's Flu Resource Center: [organicconsumers.org/flu.cfm](http://organicconsumers.org/flu.cfm)

## How to Avoid Swine Flu

Swine flu has now spread across Mexico and into Europe, Latin America and several US States, including California, Texas, and New York. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have provided the following tips for staying healthy through the pandemic:

- ▶ Wash your hands frequently and for at least 20 seconds each time.
- ▶ Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- ▶ Viruses and bacteria can live two hours or longer on surfaces like cafeteria tables, doorknobs, and desks.
- ▶ Swine Flu cannot be spread through pork products, but you should avoid close contact with sick people.
- ▶ If you have flu-like symptoms, contact your doctor. Documentation of the disease spread is important as is medical advice on dealing with the illness.
- ▶ The symptoms of swine flu in people are similar to the symptoms of regular human flu: fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills, fatigue.
- ▶ If you get sick with influenza, CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

Learn more: [organicconsumers.org/articles/article\\_17660.cfm](http://organicconsumers.org/articles/article_17660.cfm)

## Grassroots Victory: rBGH Labeling Bill Vetoed

In *Organic Bytes* #168, OCA called on readers to contact Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius and urge her to veto a bill that could restrict US dairy companies from properly labeling their milk products as free from genetically engineered bovine growth hormone (rBGH or rBST). Last week, Sebelius vetoed the bill saying, "The Bill before me provides for changes in dairy labeling that could make it more difficult to provide consumers with clear information. The milk labeling provisions negatively impact a dairy producer's ability to inform consumers that milk is from cows not treated with recombinant bovine growth hormone." A special thanks to all of our readers for taking part in the OCA action alert.



## Clarification on MSG

**OCA Web Forum User "Tater\_Chip":** "Due to the recent email from OCA (*Organic Bytes* #170 covering MSG) I was very alarmed to learn that whey protein, especially in isolate and hydrolyzed form are basically forms of this substance. I just purchased Solgar "Whey to Go" at my local health store, Mount Hope Foods. Does anyone know the relationship/safety of whey protein powders, since they are associated with MSG?"

**Response:** "I got a phone call today from Solgar. They told me that their processes do not create MSG because they use no sodium. So even though free forms of glutamic amino acids are in the formula, there is nothing for them to bind with to make the dangerous form of MSG. Now this may not be the case with cheap formulas widely available. In my opinion, I would check for sodium content on the nutrition label. If it has sodium, it could bind with the glutamic acids and form MSG unintentionally. At any rate, it is something to watch out for when buying protein powder. This rule of thumb can actually apply to other protein powders as well—not just whey. You must watch out for it in soy especially, but it may also be in pea protein powder..."

Visit OCA's web forum: [organicconsumers.org/forum/index.php](http://organicconsumers.org/forum/index.php)

## Headlines of the Week

### Cats Fed Irradiated Food Develop Severe Neurologic Disease

According to Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, cats fed an irradiated diet during gestation developed a severe neurologic disease. Cats that were returned to a normal diet recovered slowly so that by 3-4 months they were neurologically normal...

### Scientist Warning of Monsanto Health Hazards Receives Threats

"There are reports coming out of Argentina of attempts to intimidate the lead researcher of the study showing that Roundup—the glyphosate herbicide developed by Monsanto—could cause brain, intestinal and heart defects in fetuses..."

### USDA Head Vilsack Promises to Push Harder for GE Foods & Crops

"If there was any question about how the Obama administration would get behind agricultural biotechnology, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack is removing any doubt. In fact, he says he's going to do a better job than the Bush administration. Just back from the G8 summit in Italy, Vilsack pledged today to bring a "more comprehensive and integrated" approach to promoting ag biotech overseas..."

### USDA's Historic Actions to Assist Minority Farmers

"I have never seen a US Department of Agriculture (USDA) like this one. At the very beginning of the Obama administration, Tom Vilsack, the Secretary of Agriculture, has developed initiatives to address the extensive and infamous civil rights problems at USDA..."

Read these articles and many more at OCA's website:

[www.organicconsumers.org](http://www.organicconsumers.org)