

Swine Flu and the Globalized Hog Factory Farms

By [Washington's Blog](#)

Global Research, May 02, 2009

[Washington's Blog](#) 2 May 2009

Theme: [Biotechnology and GMO](#), [Science and Medicine](#)

In-depth Report: [THE H1N1 SWINE FLU PANDEMIC](#)

You have heard that this swine flu is a combination of [European, Asian and North American](#) strains.

And you know that the outbreak may have started at the [giant Granjas Carrol hog farm in Vera Cruz, Mexico](#), and that the world's largest pork producer, Smithfield Foods, is 50% owner of Granjas Carrol.

But you might not know that:

"Smithfield has controlling interests in [hog] processing plants in [Poland, Romania, and the United Kingdom](#), and smaller interests in plants in [Western Europe, Mexico, and China](#)."

In other words, Smithfield has hog processing plants in all 3 relevant continents – Europe, Asia, and North America.

Indeed, health experts [say](#) that different strains of swine flu can be mixed by birds, humans or pork products or feed:

The question, then, is could the Asian avian virus contain swine flu components from Eurasian pigs?

"Absolutely," said Ellen Silbergeld, professor of environmental health sciences at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, and a leading researcher of pathogen evolution in CAFOs. "A pig infected by avian virus can then come into contact with swine virus, which then combines and gets picked up by a bird again. It's a viral patchwork. Wild birds can carry virus with swine components in it – a lot of avian viruses contain elements from pigs."

Silbergeld is by no means convinced that birds brought the Eurasian genetic material to Mexico.

"Pig's don't fly, but pork does," she said. "There is an active international transfer of all kinds of animal products, including food, food components, animal waste, offal, feed made of rendered animals and so on. Some of it is imported from Asia or Europe."

And of course, people fly, too. Dr. Silbergeld thinks that human travel is the most likely way that Eurasian swine viral components made their way to Mexico. "A tourist from China could have gone to Mexico City, and that Asian strain was picked up by somebody else, who then went to a swine barn," she

suggested. "It's a likely explanation. Sometimes we overestimate what wild birds can do."

Does Smithfield ship feed or pork products between its different facilities?

Smithfield's operations should be examined to see if it is mixing food, food components, waste, offal or feed from its facilities in different continents in an unsafe manner.

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