

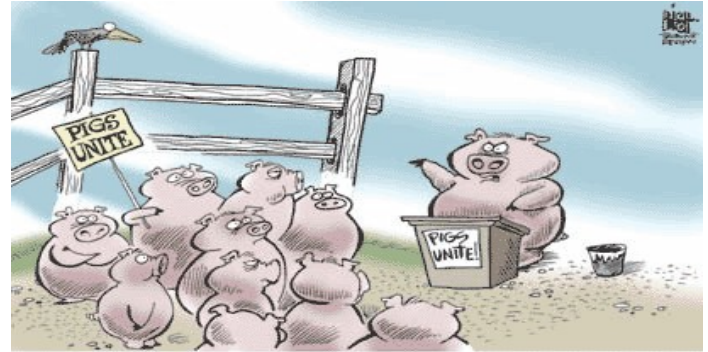
# NAFTA MAKES US SICK!

## Swine Flu, Factory Farming, and NAFTA

### The Free Trade-Factory Farm Connection

Since the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1994, Mexico has seen a major shift towards factory farm agriculture. NAFTA directly contributed to the increase in factory farms by eliminating tariffs on US agricultural exports, allowing the US to sell its factory farm exports in Mexico at prices below those offered by local family farmers, driving family farmers out of business.

The elimination of import tariffs on government subsidized, US produced feed crops allowed US agribusiness to outsource factory farms to Mexico, as they were now able to access the same low-cost feed available in the US while also taking advantage of Mexico's lower wages and more lax environmental and safety regulations to minimize costs. As US imports on Mexican products agricultural commodities were also eliminated, the products of these factory farms could then be exported back to the US. In effect, efforts to regulate or ban factory farms by animal advocates, environmentalists, and public health advocates are made virtually irrelevant, because corporations now need only to shift production south of the border.



THE TURKEYS HAVE BIRD FLU. THE COWS HAVE MAD COW DISEASE. I'M TELLING YOU, BOYS... UNLESS WE WANT TO SEE MORE HAM SERVED ON THANKSGIVING, WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO GET OUR OWN DISEASE!

### NAFTA + Factory Farming = Swine Flu

According to the Pew Commission on Industrial Farm Animal Production (IFAP), "one of the most serious unintended consequences of industrial food animal production is the growing public health threat of these types of facilities. In addition to the contribution of IFAP to the major threat of antimicrobial resistance, IFAP facilities can be harmful to workers, neighbors, and even those living far from the facilities through air and water pollution, and via the spread of disease. Workers in and neighbors of IFAP facilities experience high levels of respiratory problems, including asthma. In addition, workers can serve as a bridging population, transmitting animal-borne diseases to a wider population. A lack of appropriate treatment of enormous amounts of waste may result in contamination of nearby waters with harmful levels of nutrients and toxins, as well as bacteria, fungi, and viruses, all of which can affect the health of people both near and far from IFAP facilities."



On factory, farms, hogs live under constant conditions of intensive confinement.

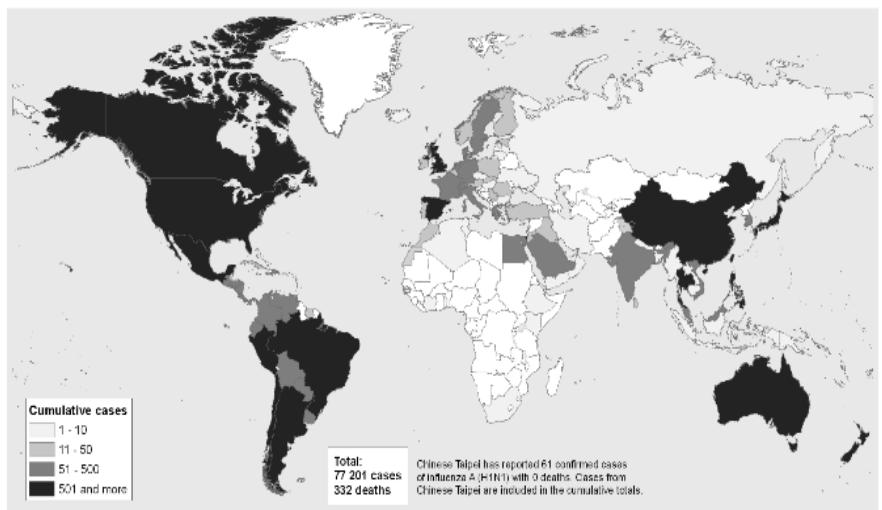
Under these conditions, the rise of disease epidemics are inevitable.

According to Laura Carlsen of the Center for International Policy (CIP) Americas Program, "For years scientists have known that pigs incubate and mutate viruses and many have warned that "factory farms" where large numbers are kept in close quarters create a perfect breeding ground for the rapid evolution of disease. The massive use of antibiotics means that viruses seek mutations resistant to the medicines. In the past, few cases of swine flu passing to human transmission were reported but it has long been known that it is possible. This virus posed a particular risk because of its contagion from human to human."

Breaking out first in Mexico in mid March '09, the virus, H1N1, spread to hundreds of cases within days, but was not discovered until early April '09. By late April, 152 deaths had been connected to the disease. The World Health Organization has declared that as many as 23,000 people may have been infected in Mexico, and H1N1 has spread to the U.S. and beyond, to at least 35 other countries. The far-and-wide transmission of the disease has alarmed the world, with the U.S. even declaring a state of emergency concerning the outbreak. In the panic, countries have mandated the slaughter of thousands of pigs, blamed for the incubation of the disease. Indeed, the new, lethal

Pandemic (H1N1) 2009,  
Number of laboratory confirmed cases as reported to WHO

Status as of 01 July 2009  
09:00 GMT



strain of so-called 'Swine Flu' apparently developed in hog farms, where unsanitary conditions and copious anti-bodies breed tough, resistant, highly infectious diseases.

The swine flu epidemic is believed to have started at the Smithfield owned Carroll Ranches hog farm in Veracruz, Mexico. According to Al Giordano of Narco News, "In 1985, Smithfield Foods received what was, at the time, the most expensive fine in history - \$12.6 million - for violating the US Clean Water Act at its pig facilities near the Pagan River in Smithfield, Virginia, a tributary that flows into the Chesapeake Bay. The company, according to the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) dumped hog waste into the river. It was a case in which US environmental law succeeded in forcing a polluter, Smithfield Foods, to construct a sewage treatment plant at that facility after decades of using the river as a mega-toilet. But "free trade" opened a path for Smithfield Foods to simply move its harmful practices next door into Mexico so that it could evade the tougher US regulators.

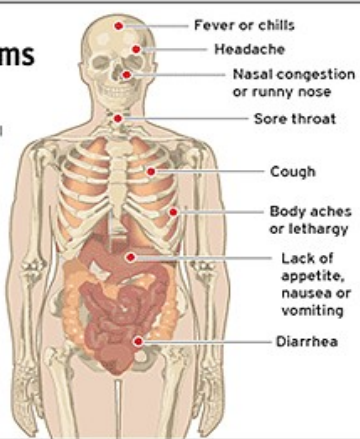
"The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) came into effect on January 1, 1994. That very same year Smithfield Foods opened the "Carroll Ranches" in the Mexican state of Veracruz through a new subsidiary corporation, "Agroindustrias de México." Unlike what law enforcers forced upon Smithfield Foods in the US, the new Mexican facility - processing 800,000 pigs into bacon and other products per year - does not have a sewage treatment plant."

The Mexican daily La Jornada reports, "Clouds of flies emanate from the rusty lagoons where the Carroll Ranches business tosses the fecal wastes of its pig farms, and the open-air contamination is already generating an epidemic of respiratory infections in the town of La Gloria, in the Perote Valley, according to Town Administrator Bertha Crisóstomo López."



## Swine flu symptoms

Symptoms of the swine flu are very similar to those of seasonal influenza. If you feel ill, stay home from work and school because an infected person can shed the virus 24 hours before symptoms start, and up to seven days later. If you exhibit symptoms and believe you may have swine flu, call your physician before making a trip to see him or her, then follow advice on how to proceed.



SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

MSNBC.com

## Holding Obama to His Campaign Promises

Recognizing that US voters are fed up with NAFTA, in 2008 Candidate Obama shrewdly ran on a campaign promise to renegotiate NAFTA. Yet since taking office he has given no indication that he intends to make good on this promise. In fact, US Trade Representative Ron Kirk has made it a priority to push Congress to ratify three free trade agreements negotiated during the Bush presidency, agreements with Panama, Colombia, and South Korea.

By contrast, many of the Freshman and Sophomore Congressional Democrats who campaigned as opponents of the NAFTA free trade model in 2006 and 2008 are committed to changing US trade policy to include more labor and environmental safeguards. Many of these legislators are among the 114 cosponsors of the TRADE Act, a bill that introduces a new template for US trade policy and highlights many of the problems with current trade policy. Unfortunately, they face fierce opposition from old guard Democratic leaders who are still in the pockets of industries that benefit from free trade agreements. With legislators on the fence being pulled from both directions, it is vital that they feel pressure from constituents fed up with dangerous free trade policies.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- **CONTACT YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS** Call, email, or fax your Senators, Representative, and President Obama, and urge them to repeal NAFTA, as well as the similar Central American-Dominican Republic and Peru Free Trade Agreements. Tell them we need trade policies that protect public health, limit imports of unsafe food, and raise health and safety standards. What we DON'T need are trade policies that endanger our health by encouraging food producers to shift production to countries with lower health and safety standards and import dangerous products back to the US. Encourage President Obama to investigate the threat posed to health, safety, and the environment by factory farms here in the US and to take action to prevent US corporations from expanding this model of agriculture into the developing world. You can find your elected officials' contact info at <http://snipurl.com/LegLookup>.
- **CHANGE YOUR DIET** Consider making the switch to a plant-based diet. Experts predict that expanded disease epidemics are an inevitable consequence of expanded rates of global meat consumption. With infectious disease experts predicting billions of deaths if avian influenza reaches pandemic levels, a global shift away from the consumption of animal products is essential to avert catastrophe. Visit <http://www.pcrm.org/health/veginfo/vsk/> for a free online guide to healthy plant-based eating from the Physician's Committee for Responsible Medicine.
- **VOLUNTEER AND DONATE** Volunteer with Global Justice for Animals and the Environment to educate the public and our elected officials on the need for international trade policies that protect rather than endanger public health. Call or email us for details. Donate funds or supplies to support our work. Visit <http://freetradekillsanimals.org/?page=Donation> to learn how you can make a donation.

**Global Justice for Animals and the Environment**

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