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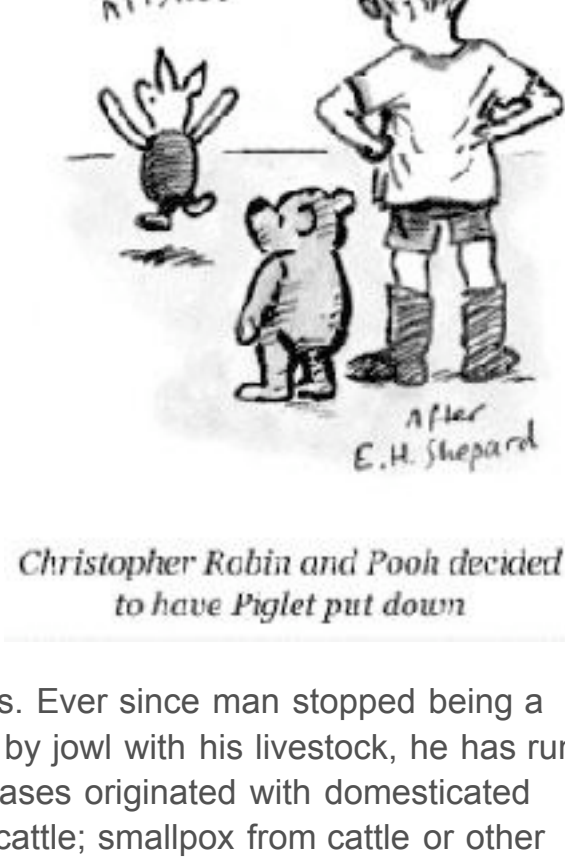
HOME > HEALTH > SWINE FLU

Swine flu is a heavy price to pay for a pork chop

The swine flu outbreak in Mexico is part of a pattern of disease which began when we started living cheek by jowl with our livestock, says Philip Johnston .

By Philip Johnston Published: 5:25PM BST 28 Apr 2009 Comments 25 | Comment on this article

What is it about swine flu that makes it hard to take seriously? The jokes are already doing the rounds, from Matt's brilliant cartoon of Piglet about to be despatched by Christopher Robin and Winnie the Pooh, to inquiries about whether it's still safe to eat guacamole and tacos. Perhaps we would be more respectful of the virus if it were called Mexican Influenza, acquiring a geographical identity attached to the great pandemics of yore, like Spanish Flu, which killed an estimated 20 million after the Great War, or the less virulent Hong Kong Flu in the 1960s. Maybe it is the porcine source of this particular microbe that lends itself to levity.



Christopher Robin and Pooh decided to have Piglet put down

Yet it is our proximity to the animals that have sustained us for millennia that makes us so vulnerable to the diseases that can kill us in large numbers. Ever since man stopped being a hunter-gatherer and began to live cheek by jowl with his livestock, he has run the risk of pandemics. Many human diseases originated with domesticated animals: measles and tuberculosis from cattle; smallpox from cattle or other livestock with related pox viruses; flu from pigs and ducks; and whooping cough from dogs. These pathogens developed and spread easily because the animals lived in herds or packs. When they were domesticated by the first farmers, the viruses were waiting to be passed on. These so-called zoonotic diseases are then transmitted more readily among humans because people themselves live in close proximity to one another. Although the Mexican flu is thought to have begun in a rural pig farm, it is no surprise that it took hold in Mexico City, ranked the eighth largest megalopolis in the world with 20 million people.

Most infectious diseases are relatively recent arrivals in human history, reflecting the growth of population: smallpox dates to around 1600BC (pock marks can be seen on the mummified remains of Pharaoh Ramses V in Cairo museum), mumps 400BC, leprosy 200BC, polio 1840 and Aids 1959. This is why the World Health Organisation can confidently predict that there will be another pandemic - not necessarily as a result of this outbreak but certainly at some point in the not-too-distant future. The world needs to be ready either by possessing the wherewithal to fight the disease or by taking drastic action to contain it, which is especially difficult when global travel is so easy.

None the less, even if Mexican flu has pandemic potential, it needs to be put in context. At the moment there are fewer than 2,000 suspected cases and only 30 or so are confirmed. Compare this with the hundreds of thousands who die every year in Africa and Asia from diseases such as yellow fever or Aids and you wonder what all the fuss is about. Malaria, the world's biggest killer, claims three million victims a year, yet people still travel to malarial countries, advisedly taking prophylactic drugs with them. In the fifth century, an outbreak of falciparum malaria, derived from chickens and ducks, is thought to have contributed to the fall of the Roman Empire.

Malaria, however, is confined to particular areas and is not passed from human to human. Influenza is dangerous because it can spread around the world and is highly contagious, though the Mexican strain is treatable. Spanish Flu was the worst pandemic in history in terms of fatalities, worse even than the Black Death or the various smallpox outbreaks that have eradicated civilisations. The cause of all these pandemics has been the rise of agriculture over the past 5,000 years and its ability to sustain higher human population densities. It is a lethal offering from the animals we farm, and a heavy price to pay for a pork chop or a sirloin steak.

MORE ON Swine Flu Comment Philip Johnston Personal View

COMMENTS: 25

Sharkyjones "My point - domestic livestock was both source and cure."

Actually, the smallpox vaccination did not save people from contracting smallpox, it actually killed 10s of thousands of people. If you look at the mortality rates from smallpox over the 18th, 19th and 20th century, you can see that the introduction of vaccination INCREASED the number of deaths. There was a 40% increase in smallpox deaths after vaccination was introduced, for only a 9% increase in the population. Babies, children and adults died horribly from vaccine-induced infections.

Improvements in sanitation, provision of clean water and increased awareness of hygiene, and a good diet, were, and still are, the real winners in reducing disease.

Re: Rob 8217 April 2009

The Flea of the Black Rat

Isabel NZ. PS:Witty quote:

"Something smells not only in the state of denmark PLONKERS" PS:ESP/Telepathy/2009

<=====O=====

The WHO reports 7 - yes s-e-v-e-n deaths from swine flu, not the 150+ the media is reporting. Don't let the facts get in your way at spreading a crisis. G O O G L E I T

They've been warning us for ages now to expect a flu pandemic. They just didn't tell us where and when they would release it.

I am extremely alarmed about the latest developments regarding this disease/ virus.

The government has just ordered more vaccines, yet the simplist of tasks being stopping all outbound and inbound flights to and from Mexico has not been enacted, why?

Why do we have to wait for the EU for permission to protect ourselves? Germany didnt?

I would like to see Hague, Grayling and Lansley do a joint press conference co-ordinating shadow departments as they will in a years time, calling for the suspension for 7 days of all flights to and from Mexico.

I cannot believe this wasn't done immediately, and furthermore, if it is a serious as we are led to believe then this is worrying that COBRA didn't even think of it!

Mexico city sits at 2,400meters above sea level, has a high population density and has a highly poluted atmosphere. Little wonder the effects are more noticable.

The influenza (Myxoviruses) viruses affect essentially the respiratory tract in man, the pig,the horse and there and the alimentary tract of fowl. The damage they do varies but it is a mistake to assume the infectiousness equates directly with virulence. Hence in the disease the morbidity and mortality rates can vary greatly, as those affected in the last major world-wide outbreak in man, to wit Asian flu, in 1958. In view of these long-established facts it is astonishing to observe that the current, misnamed outbreak seems to be attacking the central nervous system not only in the possibly exposed or infected but in every living creature. The most gravely affected, however, are the professional purveyors of information, whose brains seem to be addled, probably because they knew no microbiology, molecular biology, epidemiology or pathology but have become experts in all four fields overnight. That might be real the pandemic threatening the world.

But why is anybody worried? Our own Dear Leader has told his adoring subjects that we are the best placed, best organised to weather this little storm.

This is the same Dear Leader who told us all that the UK is the nation best placed to weather the world recession.

Help, Help, Help!!!!

A well balanced and sensible article - which is more than can be said for the hysteria being propagated by the Worlds media. O well I suppose it makes a change from financial hysteria. New flu bugs happen every year, this is just another one. And why is it not affecting the older population? - could it be that this bug has been round before and we have built some immunity? - not seen anyone mention that so far.

"smallpox from cattle"

Equally cattle provided the cure to smallpox - or at least the vaccine (from vacca latin for cow) - Thanks to Edward Jenner who recognised milkmaids often caught "cowpox" similar but less virulent - he inoculated a boy with cowpox and then exposed him to smallpox and he didn't catch it.

Saving millions - today he'd be put in prison.

Additionally vaccines were and some still are (i think anthrax still) cultivated in animals e.g. horses.

My point - domestic livestock was both source and cure.

Black Death came from rats

This goverment feels the need for constant scare-mongering - bird flue; imminent terrorist attack; that nun who wants to take a bottle of water through airport security - and it's all bonkers, just a distraction from the appalling job they are doing in running (oops, typed "ruining" first) the country.

The cost in leafletting every home in GB because two very well-publicised people in Scotland have (sadly) been infected, is typical of the reaction the rest of us then have to pay for.

It doesn't seem that long ago that HIV was called green monkey disease and alleged to have somehow become enable to infect humans.

Are we now to live in fear of a bag of pork scratchings, uncremated chicken and turkey or beef with indestructible prions.

I'd stay at home and be safe - but the petrochemical additions to all the plastics are quietly killing me there according to the pundits.

Maybe we are being led to vegetarianism and away from the intensive culture of animals - particularly those sharing close accommodation with humans.

280409-21:53

IT is a mutant or mutated for the purpose of Virus Warfare....think carefully.

Isabel Witty NZ <=====O=====

I'll tell you why we don't take it seriously - because the government jumps on ANYTHING to drag attention away from them. Global warming, avian-flu, swine-flu, blah, blah, blah. It's started already - IF swine flu becomes a 'pandemic' (oh, how they love pandemics) then 99% of Brits will die including all your children - but Gordon promises he is doing everything in his power to keep you safe. Governments love keeping you scared to death - it makes them feel good and lets them get on with the job of ripping you off.

Great parliamentary picture with this article. Is that Harriet Harpig I see behind Gordon Browning?

Oops, more haste less speed. I forgot the link. Sorry.

http://informationclearinghouse.info/article22507.htm

Here is a short four minute video that puts things in a slightly better perspective.

The underlying message is a little sinister. The vid is inferring that the "Vaccine Stockpile" is probably the same lot that was killing people in 1976, that is being recycled. Whoopee doo, hooray for entrepreneurs. But seriously the vaccine killed 23 people while the 1976 "swine flu" horror killed one.

Incidentally the two people in new york that have contracted the disease have not even been hospitalised. So much for fear of contagion. Government by fear.

This is another effort by failing governments to stress the people.

Would you rather be a hunter gatherer then?

Will our monkeys and apes succumb to this outbreak/ what about domestic pets?

Considering the huge expense that leafletting every home in the UK will involve, this is indeed a vulgar waste of money . No-one will take any notice anyway. Does this infection spread to domestic pets too?

Do this crazy Government really need to send out leaflets, at what cost, just watch Sky News !

"Maybe it is the porcine source of this particular microbe that lends itself to levity."

Swine flu does not come from pigs.

One of the surface proteins of the virus is similar to that of a virus that most commonly affects pigs, but no pig has ever been known to contract swine flu. It's good to see you did your research before making up scientific facts.

.....but do the animals moan about the diseases they get from us humans and promote world-wide health scares ? No. We could learn a lot from animals about stoicism etc.

"Natural mutation" Orchestrated mutation In an overpopulated Planet Earth it is the specie Homo sapien (by many) considered to be surplus to requirements A NWO OMG? <#####<<

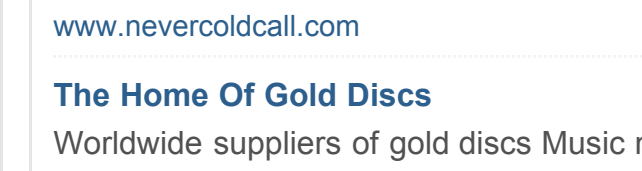
Mexico to Panama to Brazil.....Isabel ESP: PS!: Telepathy: Cheerio for now...

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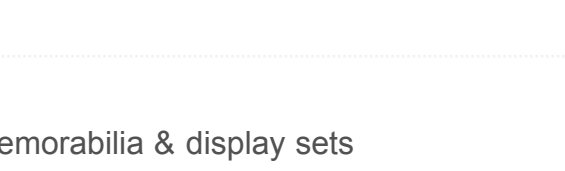
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