

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3486/09  
by Antolín Sánchez Presedo (PSE)  
to the Commission

Subject: Virus mutation and cramped conditions in livestock farms

According to specialist reports, the first triple hybrid human/bird/pig virus to be discovered was in 1998 in a large North Carolina pig farm. It spread throughout the United States the following year. Some experts have attributed the emergence of the virus to the intensive farming practices in the United States, where poultry and pigs are reared in cramped conditions. With the appearance of the swine flu virus in Mexico, it has been reported in the media that residents had previously expressed concern about similar practices in some of the affected areas.

Although the bird flu virus was endemic in wild birds and did not cross from species to species, it would be important to investigate whether its evolution and mutation into more dangerous viruses could be related to this model of intensive, industrial poultry farming in humid and highly concentrated conditions.

Does the Commission consider this hypothesis worthy of further examination? Has some form of investigation taken place, or if not, will it? Is there evidence to support it? Will an international initiative be undertaken?