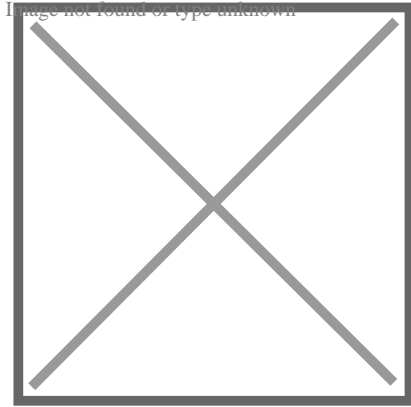


## Podcast: How ‘fake news’ about avian flu almost sent virologist Ilaria Capua to prison for life

“R esearcher sentenced to life in prison for spreading deadly flu virus” isn’t something you’d expect to read in a news story today. It’s the kind of outlandish scenario usually reserved to science fiction books and movies, and few scientists ever consider that their work could land them in jail. But virologist Ilaria Capua really faced the prospect of a [life behind bars](#).



Ilaria Capua

An internationally recognized expert on avian influenza, Capua launched a project in 2006 to make genetic information about viruses more accessible, in the interest of speeding up the search for cures to infectious diseases. Her work was essential to moving viral information and samples to scientists all over the world. Instead of receiving thanks for her efforts, Capua was quietly put under investigation by authorities in Italy.

Wire taps and other secretly gathered evidence filled a file that was eventually discovered, leaked and maliciously reinterpreted to allege that Capua hatched an international virus trafficking conspiracy. She was accused in the media, without evidence, of providing viruses for others to spread so that she and ‘Big Pharma’ could profit from producing vaccines.

Years later, the [charges were dismissed](#) as manufactured media hype, what we may also call “fake news.” However, the events were life changing, and Capua now uses her harrowing experience to educate policymakers and law enforcement about science, while continuing her work as a virologist. On this episode of Talking Biotech, Capua joins plant geneticist Kevin Folta to recount her traumatic story, and analyze the 2019 nCov Coronavirus outbreak.

[https://content.blubrry.com/talkingbiotech/225-capua\\_audio.mp3](https://content.blubrry.com/talkingbiotech/225-capua_audio.mp3)

Ilaria Capua is a world-renown virologist and professor at the University of Florida. Visit [her website](#) and follow her on Twitter [@ilariacapua](#)

Kevin M. Folta is a professor in the Horticultural Sciences Department at the University of Florida. Follow professor Folta on Twitter [@kevinfolta](#) and email your questions to [kfolta@ufl.edu](mailto:kfolta@ufl.edu)

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