

FACT SHEET

FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE



WHAT IS FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE?

Foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) is a highly contagious viral disease that affects cloven-hoofed animals including;

- ▶ cattle
- ▶ sheep
- ▶ pigs
- ▶ goats
- ▶ camels, alpaca, llama and deer.

FMD is an exotic disease, meaning it does not occur in Australia.

Remaining vigilant is vital for serious diseases like FMD and early detection is the key to minimising social and economic impacts.

FMD is a notifiable disease. If you suspect your livestock are infected with FMD, you are legally obliged to report it.

Contact the 24-hour Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888.

HOW IS IT SPREAD?

FMD spreads rapidly between animals by direct or indirect contact. The virus can be present in saliva, breath, mucous, milk, faeces and blisters of infected animals and airborne spread can occur over long distances.

Direct contact is animal-to-animal contact, where animals may share a paddock, yard or pen. Indirect contact is where animals come into contact with contaminated materials including;

- ▶ grass, straw, or wool
- ▶ hands, clothing, shoes and equipment such as vehicles, tyres and so on
- ▶ contaminated domestic animals such as dogs, cats, foxes and poultry that can carry the virus on their coats
- ▶ carcasses of infected animals
- ▶ airborne infection, for example pigs excrete 1000 to 3000 times more virus than sheep or cattle in their breath.
- ▶ swill feeding of meat from contaminated animals.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS?

Signs can vary. Sometimes they are too subtle to detect, or the animal may appear depressed, have a fever or be exhibiting some or all of the following;

- ▶ develop sores and blisters in the mouth, tongue and on feet, which are less prominent in sheep
- ▶ profuse drooling and smacking lips
- ▶ sudden or uncharacteristic lameness, which is the main indicator in sheep
- ▶ tendency to lie down and reluctance to move as a result of lameness
- ▶ raised temperature and reduced milk yield in cattle
- ▶ unwillingness to allow lambs to suckle in sheep.

IMPACT OF AN FMD OUTBREAK

Industry

The cost of a large 12 month outbreak in Australia has been estimated at about \$16 billion and the most significant impact would be to Australia's agricultural export industry.

Our trade partners are not obliged to accept Australian exports and may impose their own timelines, possibly adding months to the process, if an outbreak occurred.

Severe social and economic impacts would be experienced by other major industries including the tourism industry as well.

On-farm

FMD does not usually kill adult animals, but can be lethal in young animals causing production losses.

The main way to control FMD is by humane slaughter of infected animals, movement bans and restrictions, preventing uninfected animals from being exposed to the disease, and possible vaccination of susceptible stock.

Human infections are very rare and are not serious. However, humans can carry the virus in their nose for up to 24 hours spreading the infection to animals.

WHO TO CONTACT

If you see uncharacteristic footsoreness, drooling, blisters or unexplained deaths, call your preferred vet immediately or the 24 hour Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888.

False alarms are better than missing a case of FMD.

CAN LIVESTOCK BE TREATED?

Infected livestock are not treated, they are humanely euthanised to prevent further spread.

Vaccination may be used by authorised people only to control an outbreak of the disease. It is not used as a preventative measure.

HOW EASILY COULD FMD BE INTRODUCED IN AUSTRALIA?

Australia has strict quarantine regulations in place on live animals, semen or uncooked meat or unprocessed dairy products from FMD-affected countries or zones.

However, illegally imported contaminated animal products pose the greatest threat introducing FMD.

Feeding food waste to pigs, swill feeding, especially meat products, is banned in Australia for this reason. Swill feeding has caused outbreaks of FMD in other countries, including the 2001 outbreak in the United Kingdom.

The most important factor in controlling FMD is finding it early. Australia's state of preparedness is continuously under review. There are plans, such as the AUSVETPLAN, in place to manage emergency and exotic disease outbreaks.

TAKE HOME MESSAGES:

- ▶ FMD is a highly infectious disease that will spread rapidly if not detected and controlled early.
- ▶ Be aware of symptoms like severe lameness, lesions/blisters and fever in your livestock.
- ▶ Early detection is essential to reduce the impact of the disease.
- ▶ Phone your vet, local Agriculture Victoria Animal Health staff or the 24-hour Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 657 888 if you suspect FMD.

FARM BIOSECURITY

Producers play a key role in protecting Australia's livestock industries from pests and diseases by implementing sound biosecurity measures on-farm.

To find out more about building quick and simple biosecurity measures into everyday practices, and how these are an important safeguard against an FMD outbreak, visit: www.farmbiosecurity.com.au

For further information, please contact Livestock Health & Biosecurity VICTORIA on 1300 882 833, lhbv@vff.org.au or visit www.lhbv.org.au

FURTHER LINKS

FMD – Department of Agriculture and Water Recourses

<http://www.agriculture.gov.au/pests-diseases-weeds/animal/fmd>

FMD – Agriculture Victoria

<http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/pests-diseases-and-weeds/animal-diseases/general-livestock-diseases/foot-and-mouth-disease>

AUSVETPLAN FMD disease strategy – Animal Health Australia

<https://www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/our-publications/ausvetplan-manuals-and-documents/>

A Review of Australia's preparedness for the threat of Foot-and-mouth disease – Matthews' Report

<http://www.agriculture.gov.au/SiteCollectionDocuments/animal-plant/pests-diseases/animal-pests-diseases/footandmouth.pdf>

FMD hot to spot and report it – Gov.UK

<https://www.gov.uk/foot-and-mouth-disease>

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