



What to Know: Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD)

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Overview - What is FMD?

Foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) is a highly contagious viral disease that affects animals with cloven (divided) hooves, including cattle, swine, sheep, goats and deer.

- FMD **does not infect humans**, pets, birds or wildlife without cloven hooves.
- FMD **is not a food safety or public health risk** according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Food and Drug Administration, the Centers for Disease Control and the World Health Organization. Meat and milk from infected animals are still safe for human consumption.

Although not generally fatal, FMD spreads rapidly and can cause severe illness and major economic loss due to decreased production of meat and milk.

Current Status and Economic Impact

Current Status

- The **U.S. has been FMD free since 1929** due to strict import controls and herd monitoring programs.
- Recent global surveillance shows that **FMD continues to circulate widely**, with several regions experiencing significant new outbreaks.
- In 2025, Europe confronted its worst FMD outbreak since 2001, with confirmed cases in Germany, Hungary and Slovakia.

Economic Impact

If FMD were introduced today:

- It is expected to spread rapidly, especially due to frequent livestock and feed transport.
- Economic losses have been estimated at \$565 million for every hour that an outbreak goes undetected.
- An outbreak would cause:
 - Reduced meat and milk production in affected regions
 - Long-term economic loss for livestock producers
 - Potential long-term national and international trade disruptions, which could take years to recover
- The beef industry alone contributes **\$167 billion annually** to the U.S. economy. An outbreak puts this at risk.

Monitoring and Prevention in the U.S.

The United States keeps FMD out through:

- Strict import regulations exist for animals, meat, dairy products and traveler declarations.
- Active surveillance and rapid investigation of any suspicious signs. The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service conducts 400-500 foreign animal disease investigations annually.
- Screening of international cargo, luggage, mail and travelers.
- International monitoring is conducted through USDA offices worldwide.

How FMD Spreads

FMD is one of the **most transmissible diseases in livestock**, spreading by:

- **Direct contact:** Saliva, mucus, milk, feces, urine, semen or embryos.
- **Mechanical (indirect) spread:** People, clothing, footwear, vehicles, equipment, dogs and horses acting as mechanical carriers.
- **Airborne transmission:** Air movement can carry the virus over land or water for significant distances.

Clinical Signs

Animals with FMD often show:

- Fever
- Painful blisters and erosions on mouth and gums, muzzle, teats, hooves and interdigital spaces
- Lethargy and reduced appetite
- Lameness
- Decreased production and performance

What to Do if You Suspect FMD

1. Immediately report signs of FMD to:

- Your veterinarian
- Louisiana state animal health officials

- Federal or county agricultural agents – Immediate reporting is critical to containment. Learn more at www.fmdinfo.org/producers

2. Record details on:

- Observed symptoms
- Animals or equipment in contact with the affected animals
- Any movement or potential exposure **two to four days prior to signs showing**

3. Implement enhanced biosecurity:

- Stop all cattle movement.
- Restrict access to vehicles, equipment, and people.
- Isolate the suspected herd.
- Use dedicated clothing and boots for affected areas.
- Clean and disinfect equipment, trailers and alleyways.

Response Strategies for FMD Control

The USDA may use one or more of the following strategies depending on outbreak type and location:

Strategy	Description	Likelihood of Use	Application
Stamping-Out Modified with Emergency Vaccination to Slaughter	Depopulation of infected/in-contact animals. Vaccination of at-risk animals, followed by slaughter of vaccinated animals as permitted by USDA/state rules.	Highly likely	Used inside control areas in containment vaccination zones.
Stamping-Out Modified with Emergency Vaccination to Live	Depopulate infected animals, vaccinate at-risk animals without depopulating vaccinated ones. Vaccinated animals may remain alive for breeding or production.	Highly likely	Used outside control areas in protection vaccination zones.
Combination Approach	A mix of vaccination to-kill, vaccination to-slaughter and vaccination to-live, depending on location.	Highly likely	Slaughter inside control areas; vaccination to-live outside.

For more information, visit www.fmdinfo.org



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