

Foot and mouth disease



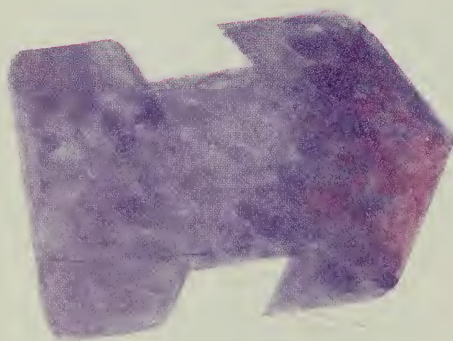
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FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE

Foot and mouth disease (FMD) is the world's most feared livestock disease. All cloven-hoofed animals are susceptible. Infected cattle, sheep and pigs develop painful blisters on the feet, tongue, muzzle or snout which rupture and secrete highly infectious fluid. Vaccines exist. However, although vaccinated animals remain healthy, they may become carriers of the disease and may infect other animals.

Foot and mouth disease spreads like wildfire and its effect on infected animals and agricultural production is devastating. Thirty years ago, a small outbreak of FMD in Canada cost the Canadian economy nearly \$1 billion in lost export sales, loss in domestic production and costs to control the disease. An outbreak today would cause nothing short of a financial disaster. It would cost us millions to stamp out and no one would buy our exports for fear of importing the disease.

To keep Canada free from FMD, the public must cooperate. Read this leaflet carefully and learn what *you* can do to prevent FMD from endangering Canada's livestock industry.

History

FMD has occurred in most countries of the world except Central America, New Zealand, Australia, Japan and Ireland. Although the disease rarely occurs in North America, Canada experienced an outbreak in Saskatchewan in 1952. The disease, likely introduced by an illegally imported meat product, was quickly eradicated.

How FMD is spread

Infection most commonly results from:

- contaminated beef, pork or sheep products imported by unsuspecting travellers;
- contaminated clothing, footwear and equipment;
- contaminated feed, water, straw and manure;
- contact with infected animals;
- semen used in artificial insemination; and
- vaccines prepared from tissues of infected animals.

There is also evidence that the wind can carry the virus from infected areas.

Foot and mouth disease is a highly resistant virus. It survives many of the processes used in preparing dairy products including high temperature short-time pasteurization. It also survives in processed meats and those that have been frozen for long periods.



A ruptured blister on the upper gum of a bovine.

If an outbreak of FMD should occur in Canada

In the event of an outbreak, Agriculture Canada has developed an emergency program to protect our economy and the health of our livestock. The government will quarantine large areas to prevent the disease's spread and restrict travel and transport. Infected and exposed livestock in the area of an outbreak will be slaughtered and compensation paid to farmers. Costs to stamp out the disease will be substantial. Canadians will pay the price with higher taxes.

Signs of FMD: What to look for

The first signs of FMD in livestock are:

- dullness;
- loss of appetite;
- fever;
- fall in milk production;
- lameness;
- drooling; and
- smacking of lips.



A blister on the end of a cow's teat.

Several days after an animal is infected, blisters form on the mouth, tongue, muzzle or snout, teats and immediately above the hooves. These blisters are filled with clear highly infectious fluid. They break easily and can rupture before they are noticed. Diagnosis of FMD may be made on the basis of symptoms and events leading to the disease. Laboratory confirmation is essential since signs of FMD can be confused with those of other foreign animal diseases.

Prevention

To prevent FMD from entering Canada, the government imposes strict regulations on our imports of susceptible livestock and their products from countries which are or have been infected. Foreign livestock are quarantined for long periods, tested for infection and must meet other standards. However, importation practices are worthless unless travellers entering Canada respect similar rules. They must declare all meat and animal products they have with them.



Infected animals often slobber.

What YOU can do

When travelling:

- Declare all meat and dairy products you wish to bring into Canada. That innocent-looking sausage may be harboring the virus that causes FMD.
- If you visit a farm while abroad, make sure that clothing and footwear you wear on the farm are free from soil and manure before entering Canada.
- If you visit a farm while abroad, do not go near a Canadian farm for 14 days.

On your farm:

- Be alert to abnormal conditions in your herds.
- Should you notice the symptoms in your livestock, contact your veterinarian or Agriculture Canada. By law, you must report suspect cases. It's your moral obligation to Canada's livestock industry.
- House and isolate all susceptible livestock pending investigation. Do not remove them from your farm.
- Don't let animals, people, vehicles or equipment enter or leave your farm until a veterinarian has examined your livestock.
- Be quick! Because FMD spreads so rapidly and is so destructive, time is of the essence.



Sloughing of an infected pig's hoof.

For more information, contact:

Animal Health Division
Agriculture Canada
2255 Carling Avenue
Ottawa K1A 0Y9
Telephone: (613) 995-5433

or the nearest Agriculture Canada veterinary inspection office.

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