

# Foot and Mouth Disease

## What is Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD)?

Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) is an extremely serious and highly infectious illness of livestock that has the potential to cause severe economic losses if an outbreak were to occur in Canada. Infected animals may recover, but the disease leaves them weakened and debilitated. FMD exists in many countries around the world.

## Which animals are susceptible to FMD?

Susceptibility is almost exclusively limited to cloven-footed animals, both domestic and wild. Cattle, hogs, sheep and goats are most frequently affected. Deer can also become infected. Single hooved animals such as horses are completely immune.

## Is FMD a food safety issue?

No, FMD is not a food safety issue. Meat and meat products from infected animals will not harm humans. Humans do not contract FMD from animals, except in extreme cases involving direct exposure to infected animals and large numbers of the virus. Even in these extreme cases it is a mild disease of short duration.

FMD is not a public health problem. A similarly named and fairly common disease of humans, known as Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease, is sometimes confused with FMD but these are two distinctly different diseases caused by different viruses. Hand, Foot, and Mouth disease is usually spread through person-to-person contact.

## What are the symptoms of FMD in animals?

Symptoms include fever, blisters in the mouth, on the tongue, at the bulb of the heel, between the toes, and on the teats. Drooling accompanies the mouth lesions. Lameness is common with foot lesions; affected animals are reluctant to move and they stand with the feet tucked up under them to relieve pain. During the acute phase, affected animals refuse feed and lose weight rapidly. Milk production may stop entirely. The disease is usually not fatal but lasts about a month in the individual animal. It takes several months longer for weight to be regained and milk production to resume.

# Foot and Mouth Disease

## What is the economic impact of FMD?

Countries that have FMD are not allowed to export live animals or fresh or frozen meat. Prior to the trade disruptions due to Canada's case of BSE, we exported approximately \$4 billion worth of cattle and beef per year and \$2.4 billion worth of live hogs and pork. It is estimated that exports of meat and live animals would be halted for a minimum of three months if an outbreak were to occur. Any severe disease outbreak that affected the livestock industry would also severely impact subsidiary industries, such as meatpacking and processing, and non-subsidiary industries, such as tourism.

## What is being done to prevent an outbreak?

The Canadian federal government continually responds to the risk of FMD outbreaks in Canada as outbreaks occur in other parts of the world. Once an outbreak is confirmed, import permits for all susceptible products from that country are suspended.

Travelers from countries infected by FMD are required to follow simple but effective disinfectant procedures at Canadian international airports, including the use of disinfectant mats. Surveillance measures to detect susceptible products include the use of detector dogs.

The general public can take an active role in preventing an outbreak of FMD by obeying all prohibitions against bringing agricultural products into Canada.

## Is Canada prepared in case we do have an outbreak?

Canada has an established response plan in the event of an outbreak of FMD or other serious animal disease.

Canada is actively working on the development of zoning protocols that would come into effect in the event of an FMD outbreak. These protocols would limit or halt the movement of cattle from designated areas of Canada to minimize further infection.

The Canadian Cattle Identification Program is an integral part of the zoning plan. This program provides individual identification of all cattle that move beyond their 'herds of origin'. In the event of a health or safety issue the program will facilitate more rapid tracing of the movement of potentially infected animals.