

# FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE

## What is Foot and Mouth Disease and how does it spread?

FMD is a highly contagious viral disease, which affects cloven-hoofed animals such as sheep, cattle, pigs, goats, llamas, and deer. It can be spread from one animal to another in saliva, mucus, milk and faeces and can be carried on wool, hair, grass, straw, footwear, clothing, livestock equipment and vehicle tyres.

It can also be spread rapidly by wind. The prevailing weather and topography determine the distance the virus can travel, and that can be considerable. For example, circumstantial evidence suggests that the outbreak on the Isle of Wight in 1981 resulted from airborne spread of the virus from Brittany in Northern France.

## What is the perfect climate for FMD?

The virus survives well in cool, damp climates and is easily transmitted when animals are penned or housed in cold weather. The virus can be destroyed by heat, low humidity or certain disinfectants, but can survive long periods when protected from the environment in a suitable medium, such as frozen or chilled carcasses of infected animals or on contaminated objects.

Under experimental conditions the virus has been shown to survive for several weeks on materials other than stock, such as soil, barn dirt, road sand and garden soil, hay, wool on sheep, hair on cattle, glass surfaces, clothing and foot wear.

## What precautions can I take to prevent an FMD outbreak?

If you have visitors to your farm that have been in a FMD affected region, do not allow them near any livestock for seven days from the time of last contact with animals or infected places overseas.

As a farmer, you have a vital role to play in the early detection of FMD. By being aware of the symptoms of the disease you can provide a critical level of surveillance and prevent the disease spreading.



Two-day-old ruptured blisters on tongue, lower gum and lower lip of a steer

## What to look for

The clinical signs can vary between species, but blisters on the nose, mouth, and feet are consistent signs. Animals go off their food, are depressed and lame, and may salivate profusely.

It is important to note that in sheep these clinical signs may not be obvious, and thorough checking is essential - especially of lame animals.

The key signs of the disease in major farm species are:

### Cattle

- slobbering and smacking of the lips;
- shivering;
- blisters in and around mouth, teats and hooves;
- raised temperature;
- reduced milk yield and sore teats.



Steer's foot

## THE THREAT

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May 2005



**If you suspect your livestock are infected with FMD immediately call Biosecurity New Zealand on: 0800 80 99 66**

## Deer

- raised temperature;
- lameness and depression;
- blisters in and around mouth and hooves;
- loss of appetite.

## Sheep and Goats

- sudden and severe lameness with a tendency to lie down;
- raised temperature;
- blisters in and around mouth and hooves;
- generally off colour;
- note that the signs of the disease may closely resemble Scabby Mouth.



Two-day-old lesion on dental pad of a sheep



Blisters on snout of pig

## Pigs

- sudden lameness with a tendency to lie down;
- raised temperature;
- squealing when attempting to walk;
- blisters on the upper edge of the hoof (where skin and hoof meet);
- blisters on the snout or tongue;
- loss of appetite.

If your description of the clinical signs leads Biosecurity New Zealand to suspect an exotic disease, you may be advised to take the following actions prior to an investigator arriving on your property.

- muster and isolate the suspect animals;
- muster animals that are known to have been in contact;
- keep the two groups separate;
- close all gates on the property and restrict movement of people and vehicles on or off the property;
- advise your neighbours and avoid any contact with neighbouring stock;
- isolate boots and clothing that have been used on the farm.



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