

## WHAT IS FMD?

Foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) is an extremely contagious animal disease that affects cattle, swine, sheep, goats, deer and other cloven-hooved animals. FMD is a serious animal disease, but not a food safety or public health issue.

The disease causes fever and painful blisters on the tongue, lips, mouths and hooves of affected animals. While the disease is not fatal, it is debilitating and severely impacts meat and milk production.

FMD is not a new disease. There are references to the disease in ancient Greece and Rome.

### How is FMD spread?

FMD can be spread from one animal to another through skin to skin contact, or by air or water. If a person has come into contact with a sick animal, that person also may carry the virus to other livestock on shoes, clothing or hands.

In addition, uncooked meat derived from livestock with FMD can actually spread the disease to livestock (but not to humans). It also can be spread when susceptible animals are held in facilities that previously held sick animals or when susceptible animals are transported in contaminated vehicles.

Because the disease is so highly contagious, the U.S. takes steps, such as disinfecting the shoes of people traveling to the U.S. from countries currently affected by FMD and who have been on farms in an effort to protect American herds.

### Does FMD exist in the U.S.?

FMD does not exist in the U.S. and has not existed since 1929. Because the U.S. has one of the most comprehensive disease prevention and eradication programs anywhere in the world, we also have one of the healthiest livestock populations.

### What nations are currently affected by FMD?

The disease has never been fully eradicated from the world's livestock populations and has been a particularly pervasive problem in some regions of Africa, South America and Asia. Most recently, Japan and the Republic of Korea confirmed several cases of FMD. North America, Central America, Australia, New Zealand, Chile and many European nations are considered free of FMD.

### What steps does the U.S. take when FMD is detected in another country?

When FMD is detected in another country, the U.S. immediately ceases animal and meat imports from that country or affected regions of the country. Once a country loses its FMD-free status, it may take years to get it back. FMD is not considered a public health threat. However, people

who have been in contact with FMD-infected animals may carry the virus between livestock if proper biosecurity measures are not followed.

### Why is the disease so difficult to contain in livestock?

The disease is difficult to contain for two reasons. First, it is highly contagious and spread in a variety of ways. Second, because its symptoms often are not severe, a livestock producer may not immediately recognize it in animals. For example, a sheep with FMD may limp due to blisters on its hooves. But the limp may not be severe enough to attract attention immediately.

However, all livestock producers in countries with and without FMD monitor livestock populations carefully to prevent the disease and contain it rapidly if it occurs.

### Does FMD pose a risk to humans?

In a few rare cases, humans that have been massively exposed to the virus, most often through close contact with infected animals, have developed a very mild version of the disease. The last known human case was in the 1960s. Only about 40 cases have been diagnosed worldwide since 1921. All humans that have developed FMD under these extreme circumstances have fully recovered.

### Is there any relationship between FMD and the human illness Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease?

The only significant similarity between these diseases is the name. Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease is the nickname for a virus called Coxsackie Virus. This virus most often causes an uncomfortable illness among children and is frequently spread in schools and daycare centers. The viruses are not related, and while FMD is a serious disease in animals, it poses an insignificant threat to humans.

### Helpful Links

North American Meat Institute  
[www.meatinstitute.org](http://www.meatinstitute.org)  
[www.meatsafety.org](http://www.meatsafety.org)

United Kingdom Department  
of Environment, Food and  
Rural Affairs  
[www.defra.gov.uk/](http://www.defra.gov.uk/)

World Organization for  
Animal Health  
[www.oie.int](http://www.oie.int)

USDA FMD Hotline  
800-601-9327

Animal and Plant Health  
Inspection Service  
[www.aphis.usda.gov](http://www.aphis.usda.gov)