



FMD: What Would The Impact Be in the U.S., and How Can Its Spread Be Prevented By Farmers and Their Suppliers?

FMD Facts:

- FMD is a devastating viral disease that spreads like wildfire throughout the livestock population. It is easily transmitted through farm visits, animal and vehicle movement through the livestock marketing system, and from farm to farm through the air. Although not fatal, it leaves animals debilitated and causes severe losses in the production of milk & meat.
- FMD is endemic in much of the world. The US is one of the few countries that have been free of the disease for a number of years. (The last outbreak was in 1929.) Other free countries include Mexico, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Since February of 2001, the UK has experienced nearly 1,700 diagnosed outbreaks of the disease. More than 3 million animals have been slaughtered, including 5 percent of the sheep population.

- FMD spread so quickly in the UK because the disease was well established before it was first diagnosed. Yet it could have been much worse. Much of the pig-producing areas in the eastern part of England largely have been spared. At least so far.
- If the US experienced a similar outbreak it would have an immediate and disastrous impact on the livestock industry and those who depend on it for meat and milk, as well as for inputs and services. A prominent economist estimates that the potential damage could exceed \$14 billion, depending on the nature of the outbreak.

- The largest losses caused by an FMD outbreak in the US would be the immediate loss of the export market, as well as a significant decline in US meat consumption. Exports accounts for 10 percent of beef production and 7 percent of hog production, and are growing at a rate of 15 percent a year. Livestock represent 20 percent of US agricultural exports.
- Although the US is "just one tourist away from FMD," the current UK outbreak has not significantly increased the risk of the disease hitting the US. Import of livestock and livestock products from the EU were already severely limited due to the presence of several livestock diseases, including BSE (Mad Cow Disease) in cattle and scrapie in sheep.
- The speed and severity of the UK outbreak has served as a valuable wake-up call to the US to evaluate and improve its livestock disease vigilance. In reality, US defenses are not as strong as they should be. Nor is the US as well equipped as it should be to deal with an outbreak of such a serious disease.
- The cost of prevention of FMD (keeping it from US shores) is a tiny fraction of the losses it would cause and the cost of eliminating it once it's here.

FMD: What Would The Impact Be in the U.S., and How Can Its Spread Be Prevented By Farmers and Their Suppliers?

▪ **Prevention and Biosecurity Tips**

The Minnesota State Board of Animal Health suggests these 10 steps for farmers to minimize the risk of foot-and-mouth disease striking their livestock:

1. Don't let people who have been in a country with foot-and-mouth disease visit your farm until they've been in the United States for at least one week.
2. Make sure their clothes have been laundered and their shoes have been cleaned before they visit your farm.
3. Any farm items from Europe, including horse-related items such as saddles should be disinfected before being brought onto your farm.
4. If someone plans to travel to a country with a foot-and-mouth outbreak, tell them not to visit farms or other places where infected animals might be found (zoos, pastures, etc.).
5. Don't allow meat products from Europe onto your farm.
6. Review your bio-security program with your veterinarian and insist that visitors wear clean clothing and boots if they're going to come in contact with your animals or their feed.
7. For now, discourage tours of your farm and unnecessary traffic to and from it.
8. Take steps to reduce cross traffic between delivery trucks and farm vehicles if possible.
9. Familiarize yourself with foot-and-mouth symptoms, which include blisters on the hoof, tongue, lips or mouth; stringy saliva dripping from the mouth, and lameness.
10. If you have any suspicion the disease is on your farm, stop movements on and off the farm and immediately contact your veterinarian.

The New York State Dept. of Agriculture & Markets adds the following:

- When a new animal moves onto your farm, be sure that you know the health status and the source of the animal.
- If possible, new additions or animals returning to your farm after going to a show or sale should be separated from the rest of the herd for at least two weeks.
- Have one common entrance/exit to your farm with disposable boots or a disinfectant footbath provided.
- Discourage walking through feed mangers and physical contact by international visitors.

For more information on FMD, check the following websites:

www.agmkt.state.ny.us
www.aphis.usda.gov/oa/fmd/
www.maff.gov.uk/animalh/diseases/fmd/
www.guardian.co.uk/footandmouth/
www.fass.org/foot_mouth.htm

Sources:

Brakke Consulting, based on June 4, 2001 Summit on FMD presented by Watt Publishing & Vance Food Systems Group.
Calving Ease Newsletter, June 2001, quoting NY State Dept. of Agriculture & Markets.
Minnesota Veterinary Medical Association News, May 2001.

June 2001