

Foot and Mouth Disease – Advice for Farmers



Fact Sheet 1

How to spot foot and mouth disease

Defra deals with the essentials of life – food, air, land, water and people.

www.defra.gov.uk



Introduction

Foot and mouth disease (FMD) is a highly contagious viral disease which affects cattle, sheep, pigs, goats and other domestic and wild cloven-hoofed animals. The clinical signs are a fever, followed by the development of blisters, mainly in the mouth and on the feet. It is very infectious and will spread rapidly if not quickly controlled.

This leaflet provides information on the disease; how to spot FMD and how it is spread. Other leaflets in this series explain what you can do to reduce the risk of disease spreading (Fact Sheet 2) and what will happen if disease is confirmed in animals on or near your farm (Fact Sheet 3).

While being one of the most significant infectious animal diseases, it is important to stress that FMD does not affect humans.





How to check for FMD in your animals

Inspect your stock carefully and regularly

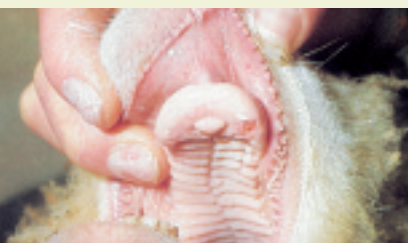
- As for all infectious diseases, early detection is essential. Inspect all stock regularly for signs of the disease. Where possible this should be done on a daily basis. Look particularly for blisters or sores on the mouth and feet.
- Do not hurry your inspections. Make sure animals are properly restrained and there is plenty of light.
- If you suspect disease in any animal you must report it immediately. Telephone your local Animal Health Divisional Office immediately. To find the number of your local office, call the Defra helpline on: 08459 33 55 77, or visit our website at www.defra.gov.uk.



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



Blistering on foot of a steer.



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



Infected pig's hooves.

What signs should I look for?

In Cattle

- Reduced milk yield.
- Raised temperature.
- Shivering.
- Lameness.
- Slobbering and smacking lips.
- Sores and blisters on the feet, in the mouth or on the tongue.

In Sheep

- Sudden, severe lameness.
- Tendency to lie down more than usual.
- Reluctance to move when made to stand.
- Blisters on the hoof and mouth. The blisters can be very small, and hard to spot.
- A higher rate of lamb mortality or abortions.
- Fatigue in young lambs.
- Ewes unwilling to allow lambs to suckle.

In Pigs

- Sudden lameness – may squeal loudly as it may be painful.
- Tendency to lie down and unwilling to move.
- Blisters on the upper edge of the hoof where the skin and horn meet, on the snout or tongue.
- Reluctance to feed.

How is the disease spread?

- The virus is present in the fluid inside the blisters the animals develop. It can also be found in their saliva, urine, dung, milk and exhaled air.
- The virus may be spread through any of the above materials before any clinical signs can be seen.
- At the height of the disease, the virus is present in the blood and all parts of the animal's body.
- Animals may catch the virus through direct or indirect contact with an infected animal.
- Good biosecurity can help reduce the risk of disease spreading to, or from, your farm. Fact Sheet 2 gives more details on preventing the spread of disease.

What is direct contact?

- animals which share a pen or field.
- nose to nose touching across a fence.





What is indirect contact?

- Indirect contact is where an uninfected animal comes into contact with infected material from an infected animal.
- It is one of the main ways infection spreads. However, practising strict biosecurity can help reduce the risk of disease spreading by this route. Indirect infection includes the following:
 - Contaminated footwear, clothes or hands of people who have close contact with infected animals, e.g. when feeding or examining stock.
 - Equipment that becomes contaminated through use on or near infected animals.
 - Any vehicle that enters and leaves premises.
 - Contamination from the carcass of an infected animal.
 - Contamination from any place where an infected animal has been; from pastures and loading ramps, to markets and roads.
 - Contamination from other animals such as dogs, cats, poultry and foxes. These animals can carry infected material on their feet or coats, but do not become infected themselves.
 - Airborne infection; infected animals – especially pigs – can breathe out a lot of virus. If this is breathed in by uninfected animals, disease can occur.

Contact us

This document is also available on the Defra, Welsh Assembly Government and Scottish Executive websites.

For telephone and email enquiries for information on any aspect of Defra, Welsh Assembly Government or Scottish Executive work, the following helplines can be used:

Defra 08459 33 55 77. (local call rate number within the UK)

Welsh Assembly Government 02920 825 572

Scottish Executive 08459 33 55 77

From outside the UK the telephone number is:
+44(0)207238 6951.

There is also a minicom/textphone number for the deaf and hard of hearing: 0845 300 1998.

The Helpline email address is:
helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London SW1P 3JR
Telephone: 020 7238 6000
Website: www.defra.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2007
Copyright in the typographical arrangement and design rests with the Crown.

This publication (excluding the logo) may be reproduced free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is reproduced accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright with the title and source of the publication specified.

Further copies of this publication are available from:
Defra Publications
Admail 6000
London
SW1A 2XX
Tel: 08459 556000

Printed on material that contains a minimum of 100% recycled fibre for uncoated paper and 75% recycled fibre for coated paper.
PB9867A T12580A