

Foot and Mouth Disease

March 2002

Fact Sheet

Environmental Health Programs
Office of Environmental Health & Safety



Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) is an animal disease caused by a virus (*Aphthovirus*). Animals with FMD have fever and blisters in the mouth, teats, and feet. Affected animals have difficulty eating and moving and may recover, but have severe losses in meat and milk production. Outbreaks of FMD can result in huge losses in the livestock industry and wildlife community.

What animals are susceptible to FMD? Cattle, swine, goats, sheep, deer, other cloven-hoofed animals, rats, and hedgehogs are susceptible to FMD. Horses, dogs, and cats are not susceptible but could spread the virus by carrying it on their hair.

How are animals exposed to the FMD virus? The FMD virus is easily spread to animals and nearly 100% of exposed animals become infected. The virus can spread from infected animals, contaminated animal feed or water, contaminated shoes or clothing, and contaminated vehicles or farm equipment. In some circumstances the virus may be spread from farm to farm by the wind.

Where does FMD occur? An epidemic of FMD in cattle, sheep and swine occurred in the United Kingdom in 2001. The disease is widespread around the world but North America, Central America, Australia, New Zealand, Chile, and some European nations are considered free of FMD. The United States has been free of FMD since 1929.

What is being done to prevent the introduction of FMD into United States? The United States Department of Agriculture banned importation of certain animals and meat products from Great Britain and Northern Ireland. There are also restrictions on the types of food products travelers can bring into the United States from the United Kingdom and Europe. Travelers arriving in the United States may be questioned about travel to farms or contact with livestock.

Is there any additional advice for travelers? Travelers should check on the US Department of Agriculture Web site (listed at the end of this fact sheet) for current recommendations to prevent the spread of FMD.

Foot and Mouth Disease (cont'd)

Does FMD cause illness in humans? Only a few human cases of FMD have ever been documented. All of these persons had direct contact with infected animals. The cases experienced a mild illness with headache, fever and possibly blisters appearing on the hands or feet, or in the mouth. The virus is not spread person-to-person or via food to humans.

Is it safe to eat meat or meat products?

There have never been reported human cases of FMD linked to eating contaminated foods. Adequate cooking of meat or other animal product will destroy any infectious agents, including the FMD virus. FMD virus has not been detected in the United States and meat from areas of the world where FMD is present is not being imported into the country.

Is FMD the same condition as Hand, Foot and Mouth disease that occurs in humans?

No. Hand, Foot and Mouth disease in humans is a mild illness caused by a different virus (*Enterovirus*). It occurs most commonly in children under 10 years old. Hand, Foot and Mouth disease is spread person-to-person by direct contact of nose and throat discharge and in the feces of infected persons.

For more information:

US Department of Agriculture (USDA)

Website:

<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/oa/fmd/index.html>

USDA toll free number for recorded information for Travelers and Consumers:
1-866-SAFGUARD.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website:

<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/other/fmd-europe-mar2001.htm>

Need More Information?

Please Contact:

Office of Environmental Health & Safety

P.O. Box 47825

Olympia, Washington 98504-7825

Toll free: 1-888-586-9427

Additional copies of this fact sheet can be obtained from:

<http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/ts/FS.htm>