

FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE



Biosecurity Guidance for Farmers

FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE

Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) is caused by a highly infectious virus and among farm stock, cattle, sheep, pigs, goats and deer are susceptible. Infected animals can produce huge quantities of the virus before clinical signs are obvious.

Foot and Mouth Disease can be spread by:

- Direct contact with an infected animal;
- Airborne spread from an infected animal;
- Infected material carried on vehicles' tyres and wheel arches and on machinery. This includes pick-ups, quad bikes, tractors, combines, trailers, any delivery vehicles, milk tankers, feed and fertiliser lorries;
- Infected material carried on e.g. people (e.g. hands, hair, clothing), equipment, sheepdogs, scavenging animals and vermin.

MINIMISING DISEASE RISK

The ultimate aim, as with any disease, and particularly with fast spreading diseases such as FMD, is to prevent infection. This guide has been produced to help those owning or caring for susceptible livestock to help keep their animals disease free.

Clinical signs

Be vigilant. Quickly recognising clinical signs of FMD in livestock is vital to controlling the disease and preventing it from spreading. In cattle and pigs the signs of disease are usually readily seen; however, sheep do not always show obvious clinical signs of FMD.

Sheep

There is a chance that some sheep in your flock, or a single sheep, may be infected without you realising it. Look out for these signs:

- Blister(s) in the dental pad (upper gum);
- Lameness and the feet may be hot to the touch;
- Loss of appetite;
- Sudden death in young lambs;
- Whitening and blisters on the coronary band (top of hoof). These may be small and covered with hair. If the blisters have burst, hair may be damp and bacterial infection may be present;
- Abortions;
- Blisters around the mouth and on the teats are rare, but be aware.

Cattle

- Temperature increase of 2-3°C;
- Loss of appetite;
- Reduced milk yield;
- Lameness with the presence of painful lesions on the feet, making the animal uncomfortable and causing it to shift its weight. Feet feel hot to the touch. Cattle may flick feet as if a stone is lodged;
- Drooling saliva and chomping of jaws;
- Nasal discharge;
- Lesions and areas of whitening in the mouth which can develop into fluid-filled blisters on the tongue;
- The presence of blisters on the teats.

Pigs

- Temperature increase of 2-3°C;
- Loss of appetite;
- Huddling together;
- Lameness, feet feel hot to the touch and unwillingness to stand;
- Hunching their backs if made to move;
- Development of white lesions and blisters on the coronary band (top of hoof) and snout.

If you suspect that any animal has FMD, isolate it, stop all livestock movement and contact your local animal health office immediately.

Biosecurity guidance

Stringent biosecurity measures are essential to reduce the risk of disease occurring on your farm or spreading it to other animals.

Biosecurity is a set of management practices that collectively reduce the potential for the introduction or spread of animal disease-causing agents into and between groups of animals. The Scottish Government wishes to encourage everyone to take responsibility for biosecurity to avoid the devastating effects of animal diseases.

Key Practices include:

- Buying in healthy stock from proven sources;
- Providing clean food and water;
- Maintaining good standards of hygiene;
- Separation and isolation of new or ill stock;
- Appropriate slurry management or disposal of faeces;
- Traceability and identification of stock, visitors and deliveries.

Further information on these routine practices is available in the biosecurity section on our website or in our 'Codes of Recommendations for the Welfare of Livestock: Animal Health and Biosecurity'.

In the event of an FMD outbreak, additional precautions that should be taken are outlined in the Scottish Government's FMD contingency plan. Briefly these are:

- **Keep livestock secure** - keep fencing in good repair; prevent nose to nose contact of your animals with your neighbours' animals; try to keep an empty field, watercourse, wood or road between your livestock and your neighbour; avoid putting cattle on pasture that has been grazed by sheep for at least 6 weeks.
- **Maintain good personal hygiene** - use protective clothing/footwear/disposable gloves; keep a separate set of clothing or overalls to wear when working with different groups of livestock; after handling animals, clean and then disinfect clothing, footwear and equipment and wash your hands with soap and water.
- **Use disinfectant footbaths** - make sure that disinfectant footbaths are kept clean and that disinfectant is changed regularly; keep footbaths covered so that rain does not dilute the disinfectant; use water to wash off all mud and dung before applying disinfectant; brush hard in the direction of the tread.
- **Keep your farm secure** - ensure that feed is securely stored to avoid unwanted vermin activity; dissuade visitors from having contact with livestock.
- **Keep unnecessary vehicles away** - Encourage visitors to park at a safe point outside the farm's entrance; have a cleaning and disinfecting point at the farm's entrance/exit points. If a vehicle has to come onto your farm it must be cleaned and disinfected and, if possible, parked away from livestock.
- **Clean and then disinfect vehicles** - All vehicles and trailers must be cleaned and disinfected before entering and leaving your farm. Use water to wash off all mud before applying disinfectant; ensure hard to reach areas, e.g. the wheels and wheel arches, the inside of the vehicle and all areas used for carrying other things such as feed, bedding or equipment are all cleaned properly.
- **Avoid visiting other farms** - If this is unavoidable, follow the cleaning and disinfecting advice; take as little onto the farm as possible; if possible wear boots and clothing supplied by your neighbour; leave your dog at home; avoid driving through dung, slurry or manure on the road; if any material falls from your vehicle, if possible, sweep it off the road; change your clothes and footwear before you visit your own animals.

FURTHER INFORMATION

FMD advice: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/footandmouth>

FMD contingency plan:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/10/17113441/34417>

Biosecurity advice:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Agriculture/animal-welfare/Diseases/GenControls/15721>

Codes of Recommendations for the Welfare of Livestock: Animal Health and Biosecurity: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2002/11/15800/13887>

For further information or advice please telephone your local animal health office:

Ayr: 01292 291350

Galashiels: 01896 758806

Inverness: 01463 253098

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