

Foot and Mouth Disease – Advice for Farmers



Fact Sheet 2

Biosecurity – Preventing the introduction and the spread of foot and mouth disease

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Department for Environment
Food and Rural Affairs



Introduction

- Biosecurity is about being aware of the ways disease can spread and taking every practical measure to minimise the risk of disease spreading. It is about practical things you can do on your farm to help prevent the introduction and spread of foot and mouth disease (FMD) to and from your animals.
- Good biosecurity should be practised at all times, not just during an outbreak. Taking the right measures in the early stages of an outbreak e.g. before we know disease is in the country, can help prevent or reduce its spread.
- In order to help reduce the risks of introduction and spread of disease as well as to eradicate FMD, it is vital that you practice the good biosecurity measures outlined in this leaflet – this will help to protect your livestock, your business – and those of your neighbours.
- The following list shows some of the routes by which FMD can be spread, but where good biosecurity measures can help to reduce the risk.
 - Contaminated footwear, clothes or hands of people who have close contact with infected animals, e.g. when feeding or examining them.
 - Equipment that becomes contaminated through use on or near infected animals.
 - Any vehicle that enters or leaves premises especially those areas where animals have been.
 - Contamination from the carcass of an infected animal.
 - Contamination from any place where an infected animal has been; from pastures, loading ramps, markets, roads, etc.
 - Contamination from other animals such as dogs, cats, poultry and foxes, which can carry infected material on their feet or coats, but do not become infected themselves.
 - Contamination through contact with infected animals from neighbouring farms where adequate separation distances are not in place.
 - Animals eating infected animal products.

A summary of advice

Avoid visiting other farms unless absolutely necessary and follow all the procedures explained here when you do.

Keep different species of livestock separate where possible.

When handling your animals, be aware that sheep do not always show obvious signs of the disease and you could inadvertently infect other animals.

Keep everything clean – materials like mud or bedding on clothes, boots equipment or vehicles can carry the virus from farm to farm or between different groups of livestock on the farm.

It is essential that you clean yourself, your vehicle and everything you carry thoroughly when you move between different groups of livestock on the farm.

Make sure you have disinfectant and cleaning material ready at your farm entrance, so that essential visitors can disinfect themselves before entering the premises and as they leave.

Keeping livestock separate

Where possible, keep an empty field, river, woods or road between groups of livestock – whether they are yours or they belong to someone else.

As far as possible ensure that all people, vehicles or equipment moving between farms, and even between different groups and types of animals, are cleansed and disinfected prior to moving.

Keep yourself clean

Materials like mud, manure, bedding or feedstuffs can carry the virus and may be picked up on hands, vehicles, clothing or equipment and transmitted to other animals.

It is essential that all these things are cleansed and, where possible, disinfected when you move between groups of livestock.

- Wash all dirt off outer clothes and footwear before you spray or brush on disinfectant. There is no point using disinfectant on dirty clothes or boots.
- Keep footbaths covered so that rain does not dilute the disinfectant. Renew the disinfectant regularly as required by the manufacturers instructions.
- Between handling different groups of animals, change outer clothing and footwear if possible and clean your hands with soap and water. Where you can, have different clothes and boots for use with each group of animals.
- Never wear your working clothes when you leave the premises, especially if you are going anywhere near livestock – or near other people who may keep livestock.
- If you have been visiting livestock, or places where livestock have been, change your clothes or footwear when you return home – and certainly before you visit your own animals. Wash dirty clothes at the highest temperature possible.
- After handling livestock or any item contaminated with mud, urine, manure etc, remember to wash your hands, especially your nails with soap and warm water. Only a tiny amount of virus is needed to infect an animal.

Vehicles

- Vehicles can carry the virus more quickly and further than anything else. The virus can be carried anywhere on the vehicle or its load – as well as on the driver.
- All vehicles must be cleansed and disinfected before entering and leaving your farm.
- It is not just the obvious places (like tyres) where infection could be carried, but also beneath and inside the vehicles. Drivers and others should ensure that they have carried out the required personal disinfection procedures before entering the cab.
- Try to avoid driving through dung or manure on the road.
- If material falls from your vehicle then, when possible, sweep it off the road.



Keep the farm secure

A major threat to your livestock is close contact with people – including those who deliver feed, fuel and fertilisers, or collect milk and other products.

- Make sure that visitors always follow biosecurity measures for both themselves and their vehicles.
- Make this as easy as possible for them, by having the proper equipment, including brushes, hoses, water and disinfectant, ready at your farm entrance.
- Where possible, ensure that you keep a record of all people who have contact with your livestock or areas where there may be contamination.
- Keep boundaries secure as straying animals could carry infection to or from your farm. Check fences, hedges, walls and gates.





Avoid visiting other farms

- If this is unavoidable be sure to take all the precautions explained for cleansing and disinfecting vehicles, equipment and people when you leave your farm, before entering another farm, on leaving another farm and on return to your own farm.
- Clean yourself and all clothing, footwear, vehicles and equipment on return to your own farm before you go near your own animals.

Extra measures during heightened risk or during an outbreak

Vehicles

- Wherever possible do not allow vehicles onto the premises.
- Only make essential journeys and, if possible, use another vehicle to visit distant stock.
- If it is safe to do so, make sure vehicles park outside the farm. Make sure that vehicles visiting your premises do not drive near your livestock and keep the parts of the farm where vehicles have to drive as clean as possible.

Avoid Visiting Other Farms

- Where possible, do not visit other farms.
- If you do visit other farms wear a face mask if possible, as FMD virus can be carried in human throats. Remember FMD does not affect humans, it is a disease of animals only.
- Take as little onto the other farm as possible and leave your dog behind. Park outside the farm where possible.
- Wear boots and clothing given to you by the farmer being visited and leave them there when you leave.
- Footpaths may be closed in areas where there is a greater risk of spreading disease, particularly on affected farms and in the Protection Zone around premises where disease is confirmed. (See Fact Sheet 3 for further information).

Keep Livestock Separate

- Prevent people, vehicles or equipment moving between farms and even between different groups and types of animals.
- Keep any animals which are not currently at your home farm away from there. If possible get a suitable person who doesn't have contact with other livestock to care for them.

Vaccination

- Vaccination offers potential benefits in disease control and the UK holds its own supplies of FMD vaccines.
- There may be circumstances during an outbreak when emergency vaccination would be appropriate but this would be subject to a risk assessment at the time.



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

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