



23 March 2010

Industry risk status Report – 'FMD'

Outbreaks of foot and mouth disease (FMD) in Asia highlights that Australia needs to be continually on-guard to remain free of the FMD scourge...this outline of the current world FMD status is provided by Animal Health Australia's Farm Biosecurity team

Foot and mouth disease is top of the list of the most unwanted livestock diseases.

It's often forgotten that Australia has had FMD three times – fortunately, on each occasion in the 1800s the virus failed to become established, and to this day Australia remains FMD-free.

However, this highly contagious virus is endemic in the Middle East, Africa, Asia and South America, and occurs sporadically in Europe. The 2001 outbreak in Great Britain still haunts – 2,000 cases of FMD were confirmed and 4,000,000 animals were slaughtered as part of the control effort.

FMD causes fever, followed by the development of blisters chiefly in the mouth and on the feet. It only affects cloven-hoofed animals including cattle, buffalo, camels, sheep, goats, deer and pigs.



This image of a pig's snout demonstrates the effects of FMD. (Source: CSIRO)

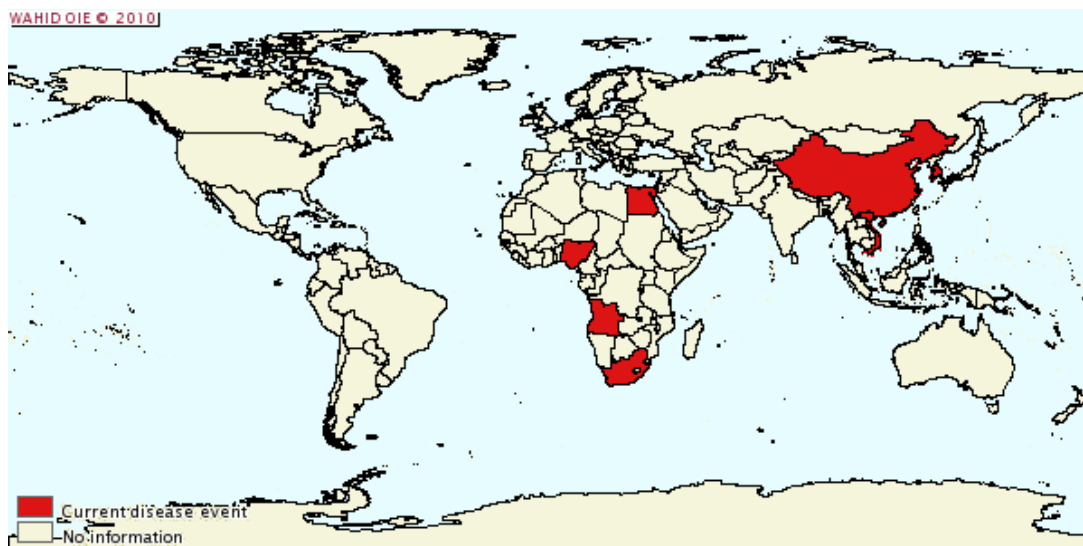
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Global FMD status

The most recent cases have been in Guangdong province, eastern China, where more than 8,300 pigs have been destroyed to control disease spread. This follows previous outbreaks in western China, where many hundreds of cattle, sheep and goats were destroyed. Earlier, in January 2010, South Korean authorities worked to control an outbreak which first arose on a dairy farm.

In 2009, FMD outbreaks were reported in Angola, Botswana, China, Egypt, Nigeria, Palestine, South Africa, Vietnam and South Korea. It is likely that other cases were not reported.



Source: www.oie.int/wahis/public.php?page=disease_status_map&disease_

In all, over 2000 livestock were destroyed in 2009 while an estimated 132,800 animals were susceptible to infection. For more, see:

http://www.oie.int/eng/info_ev/en_FMDHome.htm

Australian status

A range of biosecurity measures are in place to prevent FMD entering Australia. Strict quarantine declarations for travelers and food imports apply at all Australian entry points and all Australian governments and livestock industries regularly review their preparedness procedures.

The most probable way the virus would enter the country is via food products (such as sausages, cured or salted meats and cheeses) made overseas from meat or milk from an infected animal. If food scraps containing FMD virus are fed to livestock, the

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disease can establish. Pigs are very high risk, and for this reason, swill feeding of pigs is banned.

Farm biosecurity for FMD

Primary producers have a special role in preventing an FMD outbreak by ensuring that a source of the virus does not come into direct contact with livestock.

Even so, all people who work in farming areas or industries need to be aware of disease spread risks factors and the biosecurity measures that provide protection.

A *biosecurity checklist* can be used to prevent on farm spread:

1. do not feed swill to pigs – it is illegal in Australia
2. meet all import requirements on imported food products and genetic material
3. assess farm visitors on their level of FMD risk and maintain records
4. restrict visitor access to livestock areas to necessary contact only
5. ensure clothing and equipment are clean (and disinfected) before entering a property
6. regularly check livestock for changes in health and behavior
7. report any unusual behavior or signs of disease: 1800 675 888 – Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline

More FMD biosecurity measure information is at: www.farmbiosecurity.com.au

FMD Research

Australia's efforts to understand and manage FMD are spearheaded by the Australian Animal Health Laboratory (AAHL). Dr Martyn Jeggo, Director of AAHL, says AAHL scientists are actively involved in offshore research in several countries where FMD exists. The live virus is never brought into Australia.

This work assists Australian planning and preparedness for FMD, aims to reduce disease risks and outbreaks in those countries, and assists the development of control tools such as vaccines.

Potential massive losses

A Productivity Commission Research Report - *Impact of a Foot and Mouth Disease Outbreak on Australia* - found that the cumulative losses of export revenue from immediate suspension of all exported livestock products such as meat, wool and dairy products could equate to a loss of A\$13 billion over a 12-month outbreak. Control of an outbreak has been costed at between A\$30 - \$450 million.



If you suspect FMD: You must call your veterinarian, state or territory government animal health authority or the Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline on 1800 675 888. Remember, *FMD is a reportable disease in Australia – call 1800 675 888*

FMD key facts

- FMD is caused by a virus, commonly spread by contact between infected and susceptible animals. However, it can also travel in the air and in food products, on clothes and in the respiratory tracts of animals and humans
NB: Humans are rarely affected by the FMD virus and symptoms are mild.
- Many FMD outbreaks have started by feeding pigs with infected animal meat or milk products: **it is illegal to swill feed pigs in Australia.**
- The virus can travel 60 km downwind on land, and up to 200 km over water. It can persist in fodder and the environment for up to 1 month.
- The incubation period is typically 3 to 5 days.
- There is no treatment for infected livestock. Virus eradication is achieved by slaughtering affected and in-proximity animals, stopping animal movements, surveillance, rapid reporting and fast diagnosis.
- Vaccination of healthy animals is possible but is short-lived. Advances in molecular biology hold the promise for better, cheaper, and more stable vaccines.