

# FACTSHEET

## *Veterinary Services*

United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Animal and  
Plant Health  
Inspection  
Service

March 2001

## **USDA Safeguarding Measures Against Foot-and-Mouth Disease**

- APHIS has taken the extra precautionary step of temporarily restricting the importation of live ruminants and swine and their products from all European Union member States. Live ruminants and their products were already prohibited from all European Union member States due to the risk associated with bovine spongiform encephalopathy.
- APHIS officials are on heightened alert at U.S. land and maritime ports of entry to ensure that passengers, luggage, cargo, and mail are checked for prohibited agricultural products or other items that could carry FMD. Prohibited agricultural products are confiscated and destroyed.
- Among other measures, additional inspectors and dog teams have been placed at airports to check international incoming flights and passengers. Over 200 additional (temporary) personnel are being hired and tasked to cover high traffic international ports of entry in the United States to assist with passenger clearance, cargo inspection, cleaning and disinfection, and mail and small package inspection.
- APHIS has issued numerous alerts to its personnel, reminding them of the need to be particularly vigilant with regard to cargo, passengers, baggage, and mail arriving from the UK.
- In addition, Federal and State animal health officials have alerted private veterinarians to ensure heightened monitoring of domestic livestock for FMD. APHIS has an FMD response plan in the event the disease is detected in the United States.
- APHIS is working with the U.S. Armed Forces to ensure the cleaning and disinfection of military vehicles and equipment prior to reentry into the United States.
- USDA is continuing to emphasize the need for vigilance by our counterparts with the U.S. Customs Service, the U.S. Postal Service, and other Federal inspection agencies, as well as with private shipping companies.
- In order to directly support increased inspection personnel and activities at ports of entry, APHIS is immediately increasing the Agricultural Quarantine and Inspection funding allocation to the field by \$11.8 million.
- APHIS is conducting an inspection blitz for mismanifested meat from FMD-affected countries at major ports of entry. APHIS' Smuggling Interdiction and Trade Compliance Officers are also intensifying inspections of butcher shops, gourmet shops, markets, etc, looking for prohibited products.
- APHIS has implemented a public education campaign for travelers that is meant to inform the public about this important issue and provide them with steps they can take to prevent FMD and other exotic diseases and pests from entering the country.
- As part of the FMD public education campaign, APHIS is also disseminating information about the disease to USDA partners in industry and in State and local organizations in the United States.
- APHIS posted an industry alert to livestock owners and private veterinary practitioners to remind them to report unusual animal health symptoms to local agricultural officials.

- As a result of increased awareness of FMD, we are seeing an increase in the number of reports of suspicious lesions and other clinical signs of vesicular diseases. Such reports are immediately investigated by one of the 450 foreign animal disease diagnosticians nationwide. We are encouraging such reporting and distributing educational CD-ROMS on vesicular conditions in swine and cattle.
- We have posted additional advisory signs in airports, broadcasted public service announcements, and established an information hotline and website to inform the public about this important issue and steps they can take to prevent FMD from entering the United States.
- APHIS has created a thorough FMD website with press releases, questions and answers, factsheets, traveler information, a public service announcement, emergency management operation center updates about the worldwide outbreaks, the information hotline number, the FMD brochure, and a training module for veterinarians ([www.aphis.usda.gov](http://www.aphis.usda.gov)).
- We are continuing to disseminate information to travelers, a second toll-free number 1- 866-SAFEGUARD was developed to provide recorded tips for the traveling public to help USDA keep FMD out of the United States.
- APHIS held a press conference at Dulles International Airport to provide information to and respond to questions from the media about FMD and to demonstrate the process by which international passenger baggage is inspected and international travelers are questioned.
- APHIS is also working closely with the air transportation and travel industries to raise awareness among travelers and airline passengers and crew about the risk of inadvertently spreading FMD. On March 8, we held a conference call for travel writers and other selected members of the media.
- We have provided airline officials with the suggested text for an in-flight announcement before deplaning of arriving flights from the UK. To further ensure awareness of our needs by the airlines, Secretary Veneman sent a letter to the Air Transport Association who in turn informed the heads of the major airlines that fly to and from the UK.
- Caterers, companies, and facilities that handle garbage from incoming international aircraft are being monitored for compliance with existing agreements for safe disposal.
- Teams of U.S. veterinarians (both Federal and State) were deployed to the UK to provide assistance with the eradication program there. We will continue to send teams as requested.
- The Emergency Management Operations Center (EMOC) in Riverdale is staffed with employees from various units within APHIS in an effort to ensure a concerted, efficient and coordinated response to all inquiries. Staff have answered hundreds of telephone calls and e-mails on scientific and technical issues and industry concerns as well as an array of inquiries from the general public about FMD.
- Since the initial FMD outbreak in Great Britain on February 21, APHIS Public Affairs staff has taken an estimated 1,000 media calls.
- USDA has been coordinating and meeting regularly with appropriate federal, state, industry and university officials since the recent FMD cases were discovered. These groups include regional USDA officials, Customs, Defense, state agriculture and veterinary officials, university experts, and airline/travel industry representatives.
- APHIS held two conference calls with the State agriculture commissioners about our exclusion efforts and to offer the opportunity for the commissioners to pose questions. In addition, APHIS officials met with State agriculture officials and industry representatives for an FMD update.
- The Tripartite Exercise 2000, which was an FMD outbreak simulation involving Canada, Mexico, and the United States, resulted in a committed effort by all three countries to collaborate on their efforts to prevent FMD in North America.

## Next Steps

- To assist with preparedness, the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture has agreed to explore the acceptable methods of carcass disposal in the States, with each State to assume for this exercise that the largest herd in the State had to be depopulated and carcasses disposed of as close to the premises as possible.

- APHIS is conducting a qualitative risk assessment to examine potential pathways of entry of FMD into the U.S. and the relative risk of each pathway. The assessment will also identify any additional steps APHIS should take based on the risks identified.
- Based on the results of the Tripartite Exercise 2000, APHIS is planning to update the FMD response plan (Redbook) to incorporate new information about communication and vaccination in the event of an outbreak.
- There are several outreach materials in production including an FMD 30 second video public service announcement which will be mailed nationally to 1200 tv stations on March 30, an FMD 1:19 second traveler video currently in distribution to all U.S. International airports, and an ID card to help livestock owners identify FMD in their herds.
- APHIS is currently developing an FMD package to be distributed to Extension Agents (and others) which will include a cover letter describing what USDA is doing to safeguard the U.S. from FMD, recommendations for what U.S. residents can do to safeguard the U.S. from FMD, a form for ordering outreach materials, written and camera ready PSAs, and FMD information phone numbers and contacts.

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