



New Mexico Department of Agriculture

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News Release

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NEW MEXICO LIVESTOCK BOARD HOLDS FOOT-AND-MOUTH DISEASE EXERCISE

State Agency Meets with Key Resource Members for Emergency Drill

Las Cruces, NM - The recent outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) in Great Britain, Ireland, France, and the Netherlands has prompted the New Mexico Livestock Board to implement an emergency plan for the state. An FMD exercise was held in Albuquerque on Tuesday, March 20, 2001. The purpose of the exercise was to gather state and national agency officials, veterinarians, livestock inspectors, and others in the agriculture industry to participate in a hypothetical scenario to help study the effectiveness and further develop an emergency plan for New Mexico.

"The Livestock Board is committed to protecting the health and integrity of the livestock industry in New Mexico. We will work closely with livestock board members to carry out the emergency plan should an outbreak spread to the United States," Lieutenant Governor Walter Bradley said, "We are taking steps to protect our state and ensure that New Mexico's agricultural industry maintains its integrity."

FMD could severely affect the \$1.4 billion livestock industry in New Mexico. John Wortman, director of the New Mexico Livestock Board, says, "We want the citizens of New Mexico to know that we have been preparing for this potential problem the past four years. We want to protect the New Mexico producers and will do everything we can to prevent huge losses, if any outbreaks do occur in the US."

Thomas D. Gorman, regional coordinator program manager of the New Mexico Department of Public Safety, says, "Should FMD spread to the U.S., the state office of emergency management would activate the state's emergency center. We would coordinate the state's efforts in providing key resources during this type of outbreak situation." Gorman adds that because of limited resources in the state health department, national guard, and state police, the state would have to rely heavily on local emergency managers such as American Red Cross and county sheriffs' departments.

FMD viruses can be spread by animals, people, or materials that bring the virus into physical contact with susceptible animals. Individuals traveling to and from Great Britain, France, and the Netherlands must take extra measures to avoid contact with FMD. Clothes, shoes, and other items possibly exposed to FMD must be thoroughly disinfected before entering the United States. The disease is harmless to humans but catastrophic to the livestock industry.

For more information, contact John Wortman or state veterinarian, Dr. Steve England, of the New Mexico Livestock Board at (505) 841-6161.

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WHAT IS FOOT-AND-MOUTH DISEASE?

A severe, highly communicable viral disease of cattle and swine. It also affects sheep, goats, deer, and other cloven-hooved ruminants. FMD is not recognized as a zoonotic disease.

The disease is characterized by fever and blister-like lesions followed by erosions on the tongue and lips, in the mouth, on the teats, and between the hooves. Many affected animals recover, but the disease leaves them debilitated. It causes severe losses in the production of meat and milk.

Because it spreads widely and rapidly and because it has grave economic as well as clinical consequences, FMD is one of the animal diseases that livestock owners dread most.

WHAT CAUSES IT?

The disease is caused by a virus. The virus survives in lymph nodes and bone marrow at neutral pH, but destroyed in muscle when pH is less than 6.0. The virus can persist in contaminated fodder and the environment for up to one month, depending on the temperature and pH conditions.

There are at least seven separate types and many subtypes of the FMD virus. Immunity to one type does not protect an animal against other types.

HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

FMD viruses can spread by animals, people, or materials that bring the virus into physical contact with susceptible animals. An outbreak can occur when:

- People wearing contaminated clothes or footwear or using contaminated equipment pass the virus to susceptible animals.
- Animals carrying the virus are introduced into susceptible herds.
- Contaminated facilities are used to hold susceptible animals.
- Contaminated vehicles are used to move susceptible animals.
- Raw or improperly cooked garbage containing infected meat or animal is fed to susceptible animals.
- Susceptible animals are exposed to materials such as hay, feedstuffs, hides, or biologics contaminated with the virus.
- Susceptible animals drink common source contaminated water.
- A susceptible cow is inseminated by semen from an infected bull.

SIGNS

Vesicles (blisters) followed by erosions in the mouth or on the feet and the resulting excessive salivating or lameness are the best known signs of the disease. Often blisters may not be observed because they easily rupture, leading to erosions.

Some of these other signs may appear in affected animals during an FMD outbreak:

- Temperatures rise markedly, then usually fall in about two to three days.
- Ruptured vesicles discharge either clear or cloudy fluid and leave raw, eroded areas surrounded by ragged fragments of loose tissue.
- Sticky, foamy, stringy saliva is produced.
- Consumption of feed is reduced because of painful tongue and mouth lesions.

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- Lameness with reluctance to move is often observed.
- Abortions often occur.
- Milk flow of infected cows drop abruptly.
- Conception rates may be low.

Meat animals not normally regain lost weight for many months. Recovered cows seldom produce milk at their former rates. FMD can lead to myocarditis (inflammation of the muscular walls of the heart) and death, especially in newborn animals.

WHERE FMD OCCURS

While the disease is widespread around the world, North America, Central America, Australia, New Zealand, Chile, and some countries in Europe are considered free of FMD. Various types of FMD virus have been identified in Africa, South America, Asia, and part of Europe.

PREVENTION AND CONTROL

FMD is one of the most difficult animal infections to control. Because the disease has occurred in many parts of the world, there is always a chance of its accidental introduction into the U.S.

Animals and animal byproducts from areas known to be infected are prohibited entry into this country.

Livestock animals in this country are highly susceptible to FMD viruses. If an outbreak occurred in the U.S., this disease could spread rapidly to all sections of the country by routine livestock movements unless it was detected early and eradicated immediately.

If FMD were to spread unchecked, the economic impact could reach billions of dollars in the first year. Deer and wildlife populations could become infected rapidly and could be a source for reinfection of livestock.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

You can support the U.S. efforts against FMD by:

- Watching for slobbering, lameness, and other signs of FMD in your herd; and
- Immediately reporting any unusual or suspicious signs of disease to your local veterinarian, to state or federal animal disease control officials, or to a county agricultural agent.

If FMD should appear in the animals reported, the report will set in motion an effective state and federal eradication program.

Your participation is vital. Both the early recognition of disease signs and the prompt notification of veterinary officials are essential if eradication is to be carried out successfully.

Your warning may prevent FMD from becoming established in the United States, or, if it does spread, reduce the time and money needed to wipe it out.

For more information about FMD, contact USDA, APHIS, Veterinary Services Emergency Programs at (301)734-8073 or the APHIS Emergency Operations Center at (800) 940-6524.

Resource: United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)