

# Information About Foot and Mouth Disease for Nebraska Residents

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This NebGuide addresses foot-and-mouth disease, its causes and how to control it.

## What is foot-and-mouth disease?

Foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) is an extremely contagious viral disease of cloven-hooved animals such as cattle, pigs, sheep and deer. The disease is not commonly fatal, but causes extreme production losses in affected herds. Clinical signs of the disease include lameness, excessive salivation, reluctance to eat, abortion and blister-like erosions on the mouth and feet. Affected animals are debilitated, and may not recover to their original production levels. The disease has long been recognized as one of the most economically devastating diseases of livestock.

The virus is easily transmitted through direct contact between animals or indirectly through the movement of contaminated vehicles, shoes, clothing or food. The virus can survive in the environment for up to a month.

Humans do not get the disease, and FMD does not affect food safety. The last outbreak of FMD in the United States was in 1929. Since that time FMD has remained a foreign animal disease. The disease occurs regularly in some countries in Africa, the Middle East and South America.

## Should we be concerned about foot-and-mouth disease?

Yes, in 2001 an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease in the United Kingdom led to the slaughter of more than 6 million animals and cost approximately \$13.5 billion to control. Introduction of foot-and-mouth disease in the U.S. would be economically devastating as well.

## What actions should be taken to protect the U.S. livestock?

The United States maintains an active program to prevent the introduction of FMD and other foreign animal diseases to U.S. livestock. These efforts have recently been strengthened.

Travelers returning from countries with FMD present a difficult-to-control risk for introduction of the virus into the U.S. Travelers entering through customs should comply with all requests and recommendations of USDA officials. Do not try to sneak in meat or dairy products. Wash all clothes and wipe luggage and shoes with disinfectant solutions as directed. Travelers or their pets that have been on farms in countries with FMD should not visit U.S. farms, ranches, zoos or other livestock sources for at least one five days.

Veterinarians and livestock producers must remain vigilant for clinical signs consistent with FMD and report any suspicions to USDA their veterinarians immediately.

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