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Health Department

FACTS&details

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Foot and Mouth Disease

April 2014

What is foot and mouth disease (FMD)?

FMD is a severe, highly contagious, viral disease causing illness in cows, pigs, sheep, goats, deer, and other animals with divided hooves. It does not cause illness in humans and does not affect horses, dogs, or cats. FMD is a livestock threat, causing significant economic losses, but not a public health or food safety threat. FMD is not related to hand, foot, and mouth disease (HFMD), a common childhood illness caused by a different virus.

How common is FMD?

While many countries across the globe are dealing with FMD in their livestock population, the United States eradicated the disease in 1929. Trade restrictions prevent animals and animal byproducts from areas with FMD into the United States.

What are the symptoms of FMD?

Humans do not get FMD. Animals with FMD typically have a fever and blisters on the tongue and lips, in and around the mouth, on the mammary glands, and around the hooves. Most affected animals will not die from FMD, but the disease leaves them weakened and unable to produce meat and milk as they did before the infection.

How soon do symptoms appear after infection occurs and how long is it contagious?

FMD is caused by a virus in the family *Picornaviridae*. After an animal is infected with the virus, the first signs of illness usually appear within two to 14 days. The virus survives in living tissue and in the breath, saliva, urine and other excretions of infected animals. It can also survive in contaminated materials and the environment for several months under the right conditions.

How do people become infected?

Humans do not get FMD.

How does FMD spread?

FMD is spread to susceptible animals through physical contact with infected animals; contact with infected facilities, vehicles and materials such as hay; consumption of infected meat, animal products or water; and insemination by semen from an infected animal. Humans and animal species not susceptible to FMD can spread the disease by carrying the virus on their body from an infected area to a previously uninfected area. FMD virus is also spread through the air, depending upon weather conditions.

How can you prevent FMD?

If you travel overseas, make certain your luggage, packages and mail are free of any prohibited meats and/or dairy products, and other at-risk materials before bringing or sending them to the United States. Before returning from an area with FMD, clean and disinfect any soiled footwear or clothing. If you own livestock susceptible to FMD, watch for signs of FMD in your herd and immediately report any suspicious signs to your veterinarian. Early recognition of an outbreak in the United States will help decrease the spread of this contagious illness and protect livestock in this country.

References:

[United States Department of Agriculture \(USDA\) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service \(APHIS\), Foot-and-Mouth Disease Factsheet](#)

[The Merck Veterinary Manual, Overview of Foot-and-Mouth Disease](#)

For More Information:

Contact the Sedgwick County Health Department at 316-660-7300 or visit the Sedgwick County website at www.sedgwickcounty.org.