

Facts on the Disease

General

Foot-and-mouth disease is an acute infectious viral disease causing fever, followed by the development of vesicles (blisters) chiefly in the mouth and on the feet. It is probably more infectious than any other disease affecting animals and spreads rapidly if uncontrolled. It affects cattle, sheep, pigs, and goats. Wild and domestic cloven hooved animals and elephants, hedgehogs and rats are also susceptible.

Background of the virus

Previous outbreaks occurred in the eastern and south-eastern counties when the disease had been prevalent on the continent of Europe. In these cases infection was apparently brought to this country by airborne carriage of the virus under favourable climatic conditions. Imported meat, infected with the virus, may also be a source of infection.

Spread of the disease

Airborne spread of the virus can take place and under favourable climatic conditions the disease may be spread considerable distances by this route.

The virus is present in great quantity in the fluid from the blisters, and it can also occur in the saliva, exhaled air, milk and dung. Any of these can be a source of infection to other stock. At the height of the disease, virus is present in the blood and all parts of the body. Heat, sunlight and disinfectants will destroy the virus, whereas cold and darkness tend to keep it alive. Under favourable conditions it can survive for long periods.

Animals pick up the virus either by direct or indirect contact with an infected animal, or by contact with foodstuffs which have been contaminated by such an animal. Indirect contact includes airborne contact with infected feedstuffs or any other which may be contaminated by an infected animal or by eating or coming into contact with some part of an infected carcass.

Cattle trucks, lorries, market places, and loading ramps – where infected animals may have been present – are sources of infection until effectively disinfected. Roads may also become contaminated, and the virus may be picked up and carried on the wheels of passing vehicles such as delivery lorries, milk tankers etc.

Any person who has attended diseased animals can spread the disease; and dogs, cats, poultry, wild game and vermin may also carry infected material.

Clinical signs to look for

Cattle

- Slobbering and smacking lips
- Shivering
- Tender and sore feet
- Reduced milk yield
- Sores and blisters on feet
- Raised temperature.

FOOT - and - MOUTH Disease

Public Information

Factsheet 1



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Sheep

- Sudden, severe lameness
- Tendency to lie down
- Reluctant to move when made to stand
- Blisters on the hoof and mouth
- May be off colour.

Pigs

- Sudden lameness
- Tendency to lie down
- Lameness, may squeal loudly
- Blisters form on the upper edge of the hoof, where the skin and horn meet
- Blisters on the snout or tongue
- Off feed.

Advice to Stock Owners

- Inspect all stock at least once a day
- Do not hurry your inspections
- Check thoroughly for signs of the disease particularly for blisters or sores on the mouth and feet.

The early reporting of any suspicion of disease is vital. If you see any of these symptoms, don't wait, telephone the local Animal Health Office immediately.

If you report suspected disease, a Veterinary Officer will visit your farm as soon as possible to examine your animals, but until they arrive you should:

- lock your farm gates and put a "Keep Out" sign at farm entrance;
- not allow persons or vehicles to leave or enter your farm;
- not move any stock, crops or anything else off the premises;
- isolate all animals;
- ensure that any goods delivered are unloaded at the farm gate;
- ensure suspect animals are not moved on or across a public road.

If you are a milk producer you should prevent the collection of milk from your farm by placing a "do not collect" notice at your farm gate.

**Further copies of this leaflet can be obtained from Miss Marie Chapman,
Animal Disease Control Division, Room 104, 1a Page Street,
London SW1P 4PQ**

Tel: 020 7904 6066 (email: m.chapman@ahvg.maff.gsi.gov.uk)

**MAFF have set up a helpline for callers wanting general advice on
Foot and Mouth Disease. The number is 0845 0504141 (local rate)
8.00am to 11.00pm seven days a week.**

**Information is also available on the MAFF website
www.maff.gov.uk**



Foot and mouth disease – signs in cattle

Two day old ruptured vesicle (blister) on tongue, lower gum and lower lip of a steer



Same animal as above with four day old lesions



Steers foot

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Foot and mouth disease – signs in sheep

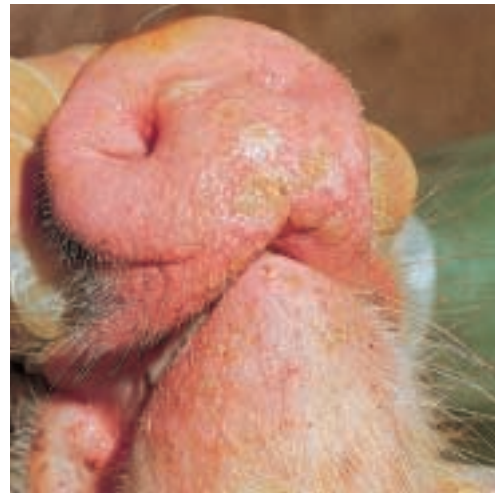


**Two day old lesion on
dental pad of a sheep**



**Sheeps foot with
coronary band vesicles
(blisters) one of which
has ruptured**

Foot and mouth disease – signs in pigs



**Vesicles on
snout of pig
(day 1)**



**Mouth of pig
showing single,
1 day old,
unruptured
vesicle at edge
of tongue**