

Emergency Response: Foot-and-Mouth Disease and Other Foreign Animal Diseases

In carrying out our safeguarding mission, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) works to ensure the continued health and welfare of our Nation's livestock and poultry. One important aspect of this work is making sure we can readily detect foreign animal diseases such as foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) and respond effectively when faced with an outbreak.

Looking for Diseases

A key element of our detection and response system is the large number of private veterinary practitioners who partner with livestock producers to report suspected foreign animal disease cases. These veterinarians are accredited by USDA and receive extra training on the signs of foreign animal diseases of concern. Their reports to State, Tribal, and Federal animal health authorities set in motion the next step in our emergency response process.

When a suspected foreign animal disease case is reported, we work with officials in that particular State to immediately send one of more than 500 specially trained foreign animal disease diagnosticians to the farm in question. The diagnostician collects samples from the affected animals and establishes initial quarantines to protect against disease spread. The samples are quickly transported to APHIS' National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) in Ames, IA, or to NVSL's Foreign Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory (FADDL) on Plum Island, NY, for diagnosis. These samples receive immediate attention, and initial results can be available within 24 hours of sample collection. If needed, a second set of samples can be tested at select National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) laboratories.

Responding to Detections

If the official laboratory tests confirm the sample is positive for a foreign animal disease, APHIS partners with State and Tribal officials to begin investigating

the source of the disease and trace any animals that may have come into contact with the disease. We notify other State, Tribal, and Federal officials of the investigation's status, and emergency response efforts then begin at the local and/or State level. APHIS works with State officials as they establish State hold orders or quarantines on specific locations or areas as needed. APHIS also puts Federal quarantines in place if needed.

If the situation involves a large number of sick or dying animals, or animals that must be depopulated to stop disease spread, APHIS emergency response teams take immediate steps to ensure the biosecurity of an affected site, establish and maintain animal movement quarantines, and alert officials in neighboring States. We also activate APHIS' Emergency Operations Center (AEOC), if needed, to begin managing communication and disease eradication efforts between Federal, State, Tribal, and local officials.

Coordinating the Response

APHIS partners with other government agencies to expand the pool of available resources we can draw on in an emergency. Depending on the scale of the outbreak, APHIS coordinates with one State or several, or we pull in national resources to support the response. When an animal health emergency has national impacts, APHIS works closely with other Federal agencies, including the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. All Federal agencies involved follow National Response Framework guidelines.

APHIS also coordinates the **National Veterinary Stockpile (NVS)** program. The NVS is our Nation's repository of veterinary "countermeasures"—animal vaccines, antivirals, supplies, equipment, and response support services. The NVS exists to provide States, Tribes, and Territories with tools to combat an animal disease outbreak. The NVS can dispatch—within 24 hours—critical resources animal health officials need onsite to keep disease from spreading.

In addition, the **North American Foot-and-Mouth Disease Vaccine Bank** stores many types of inactivated FMD virus antigens so that, in the event of an FMD outbreak, the bank can rapidly produce a vaccine. The vaccine bank serves the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

Needs for additional skilled response personnel can be addressed through the **National Animal Health Emergency Response Corps** coordinated by APHIS. Almost 1,000 veterinarians and over 3,000 animal health technicians are enrolled and prepared to become temporary USDA employees for deployment to fight a disease outbreak.

Handling an FMD Outbreak

APHIS would have the lead role in responding to an FMD outbreak, due to our animal health authority and expertise. Cooperating Federal agencies would, in turn, provide resources to us as necessary to control and eliminate the disease.

Because FMD is highly contagious, any detection in the United States would immediately activate the AEOC. There, APHIS officials would help manage local, State, Tribal, and Federal response and eradication efforts; coordinate interagency planning; and carry out national communication and information-sharing strategies. This support role is vital to ensuring a smooth response effort.

APHIS officials in the AEOC would notify animal health officials in Canada and Mexico about any FMD detection in the United States and our subsequent response efforts. In that case, APHIS' North American counterparts are prepared to put similar disease surveillance and control measures into action as well. This would help safeguard livestock resources in other areas of North America and prevent FMD from spreading further.

APHIS officials would also alert the World Organization for Animal Health, the international animal health governing body, of any FMD outbreaks and all steps taken to control the disease here.

In addition, during an FMD response, APHIS personnel working in the AEOC would help partners develop emergency response plans and interim regulations as needed to address the situation. Officials in the AEOC would stay in close contact with U.S. trading partners to offer information and monitor for unnecessary trade restrictions on our country's products.

Recovering From FMD

After we've gained some control of an FMD outbreak, our efforts would shift to helping producers recover from their losses. We would evaluate the disease situation and work to regionalize any remaining affected areas, which has two benefits: (1) it focuses disease eradication resources in key areas, and (2) animals in other areas of the country can be classified as disease-free, allowing them to move interstate and to slaughter. We would also work with animal health officials in other countries to relay critical disease monitoring information, which would help keep export markets open for animals and products certified as disease-free.

After eliminating the disease, we would meet with cooperators at all levels to assess our response activities. These types of assessments help us develop new or better ways to share resources and improve our future response efforts.

Learn More

For more information about emergency response for FMD and other foreign animal diseases, contact:

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Current information on animal diseases and disease outbreaks is also available on our Web site at www.aphis.usda.gov.

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