

Disease Prevention Guidelines for U.S. Livestock Shows, Agricultural Fairs, and Other Agriculture-Related Events

The increasing number of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) outbreaks worldwide highlights the many dangers associated with foreign animal diseases. The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), working in conjunction with its State and industry partners since 1929, has effectively safeguarded U.S. livestock resources from FMD. In response to the recent outbreaks of FMD in Europe, South America, and elsewhere around the world, APHIS has taken additional precautionary measures to further ensure that FMD does not spread to the United States. These precautionary efforts are supported and augmented by the strong safeguarding system APHIS has in place to monitor for and respond to any foreign animal disease detections across the country.

In general, because the risk of disease transmission can increase whenever large numbers of animals and people interact at shows, fairs, and other events, APHIS needs the continued assistance of event organizers to help prevent the spread of animal disease. Especially at this time, event organizers need to be aware that humans can carry the FMD virus on their clothing, shoes, bodies (particularly the throat and nasal passages), and personal items. FMD is extremely contagious and spreads easily among cloven-hoofed animals such as cattle, sheep, pigs, goats, and deer. Introduction of FMD into the United States would be disastrous to the American livestock industry and could also impact susceptible wildlife populations.

For these reasons, APHIS suggests that agricultural event planners follow several guidelines to minimize any risk of disease spread from animal to animal, or human to animal, at the event site:

- Require veterinary exams of all animals participating or being shown in the event to ensure that only healthy animals are exhibited.
- Advise event attendees who have been on a farm in an FMD-affected country within the last 5 days to avoid animal exhibits and any other interaction with animals at the event.
- Implement and practice effective biosecurity measures at the event site, including discouraging visitors (through the use of fencing, signs, and monitors) from touching or petting exhibited animals, except at designated petting exhibits.
- Prohibit the public from eating and drinking in animal exhibit areas, and prevent the public from feeding human food to animals.
- Ensure that an accredited veterinarian routinely inspects animals for clinical signs of FMD throughout the duration of the event. Clinical signs include blisters or vesicles in or on the mouths, tongues, gums, hooves, and feet of infected animals.
- Advise producers and owners to isolate their animals for a minimum of 5 days after the event and consult with their veterinarian on proper ways of reintroducing the animals into established herds or flocks.

Veterinarians should immediately report any suspicious symptoms to APHIS and State officials. APHIS, working in conjunction with private veterinary practitioners and other animal health cooperators, thoroughly investigates all possible foreign animal disease detections. APHIS can respond immediately if an emergency situation arises.

For more information, event organizers may wish to contact APHIS' Emergency Operations Center (AEOC). AEOC has been on heightened alert because of recent FMD detections around the world.

Officials staffing AEOC can answer any questions event organizers may have about the precautions that should be taken against FMD. AEOC's toll-free telephone number is (800) 601-9327.

In addition, event organizers may also wish to contact APHIS' Area Veterinarian in Charge for their State or the appropriate State Veterinarian for more information. Contact information for APHIS' Area Veterinarian in Charge for a particular State can be obtained by accessing APHIS' Web site at www.aphis.usda.gov. Once connected to the site, click on the animal health heading under the functions title. The ensuing page contains a link in the upper right-hand corner of the page to a complete listing of area APHIS offices.

For Further Information Contact:
USDA, APHIS, Veterinary Services
Emergency Programs
4700 River Road, Unit 41
Riverdale, Maryland 20737-1231
Telephone: (301) 734-8073
Fax: (301) 734-7817

APHIS Emergency Operations Center
Telephone: (800) 601-9327
e-mail: emoc@aphis.usda.gov

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