

FOOT-AND-MOUTH DISEASE IN SHEEP AND GOATS

Foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) is one of the most contagious animal diseases and is caused by FMD virus. Although FMD occurs in many parts of the world, Australia is recognised as free from FMD without vaccination.

SIGNS

FMD affects domestic and wild cloven-hoofed animals including cattle, pigs, sheep, goats, deer and water buffalo. Horses are not susceptible. The virus is not a threat to human health.

In **sheep and goats**, the clinical signs of FMD are **usually mild** with few obvious lesions but can include:

- Fever (> 40°C)
- Mild lameness and oral lesions
- Mild blisters or erosions inside the mouth or skin between the claws at the coronary band
- Drop in milk yield in dairy sheep and goats
- Sudden death in youngstock

Sudden and severe lameness in multiple feet may be present in severely affected animals.

The disease is usually mild and may go unnoticed which is a significant risk factor for the spread of the disease.



Photo credit: UK DEFRA

HOW IS FMD TRANSMITTED?

FMD virus can be shed in the fluid of ruptured blisters, exhaled air, saliva, milk, semen, faeces and urine. Animals are infected by inhalation, ingestion and artificial or natural breeding. The incubation period is 14 days and infected animals can spread the virus before showing any clinical signs of disease. In sheep and goats, direct contact and inhalation of contaminated aerosols is the primary route of transmission. Movement of infected animals is one of the most important routes by which FMD spreads between flocks and farms. Transmission easily occurs when animals are in close proximity at watering and feeding points and during congregation during yarding or milking. Contaminated clothing, equipment and vehicles can also spread the disease. The FMD virus can remain infective in the environment for several weeks to months in soil, manure, dried animal secretions, straw, hair and leather.

Source: <https://www.business.qld.gov.au/industries/service-industries-professionals/service-industries/veterinary-surgeons/foot-mouth-info/clinical-signs-sheep-goats>

If your livestock are showing signs of Foot-and-Mouth Disease, immediately call the Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline on 1800 675 888 (free call within Australia)