

# Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) Frequently Asked Questions

This Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document provides clear, practical guidance on Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) for different audiences in South Africa. It incorporates national legislation, biosecurity best practice to support disease prevention, early reporting, and compliance.

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## **1. For the Public and Visitors**

Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) is a highly contagious viral disease that affects cloven-hoofed animals such as cattle, sheep, goats and pigs. It does not pose a health risk to humans, but people can unknowingly spread the virus.

### **1.1 Can people get Foot-and-Mouth Disease?**

No. Foot-and-mouth disease is not considered a human health risk (it is not Zoonotic). People do not become ill from the disease. However, people can carry the virus on clothing, shoes, hands and vehicle tyres.

### **1.2 How can visitors help prevent the spread of FMD?**

- Avoid unnecessary visits to farms or livestock areas.
- Follow 'come clean, go clean' principles.
- Clean and disinfect footwear and vehicles after visiting rural areas.
- Respect farm biosecurity rules and signage.

## **2. For Farmers, Transporters and Traders**

### **2.1 What is Foot-and-Mouth Disease?**

FMD is a highly contagious viral disease of cloven-hoofed animals. The virus is found in saliva, milk, urine, faeces, vesicular fluid and breath of infected animals. It spreads through direct contact, aerosols, contaminated equipment, vehicles and people.

### **2.2 Do buffaloes and wild animals carry Foot-and-Mouth Disease?**

Yes. Foot-and-Mouth Disease is not limited to livestock. Certain wildlife species, particularly African buffalo, can carry the virus without showing visible signs of illness. Buffalo are recognised as natural maintenance hosts of specific Foot-and-Mouth Disease virus strains in southern Africa.

Other cloven-hoofed wild animals such as antelope, warthogs and other wildlife species can also become infected and may spread the virus to livestock through direct or indirect contact.

For this reason, special disease control zones, movement restrictions and fencing measures are implemented in parts of South Africa, particularly near conservation areas such as national parks, to prevent transmission between wildlife and livestock.

### **2.3 What are the signs of FMD in livestock?**

Common signs include:

- Blisters and sores in the mouth, tongue, gums or lips
- Drooling and difficulty eating
- Lameness due to foot lesions
- Blisters around the hooves and coronary band
- Sudden drop in milk production
- Death in young animals



Bovine, gingiva. There is an elongate erosion (ruptured vesicle) ventral to the incisors.



Bovine, lip. The buccal mucosa contains an erosion (ruptured vesicle).



Bovine, muzzle. Within the naris, the ventromedial mucosa contains an intact vesicle.



Rumen mucosa, higher magnification. There are several irregularly shaped erosions (ruptured vesicles) on the pillar.



Bovine, tongue. A large area of undermined epithelium (bulla) is centrally eroded; this lesion probably resulted from coalescence of several smaller lesions.



Bovine, tongue. Several healing vesicles have yellow-tan margins.



Goat, oral mucosa. There is a large erosion (ruptured vesicle) on the rostral mandibular buccal mucosa.



Teat. There is a ruptured vesicle on the end of the teat.



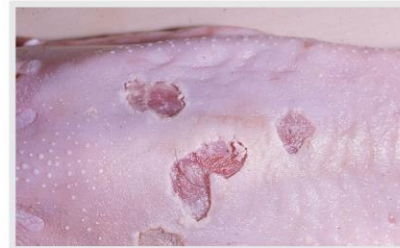
Goat, oral mucosa. There is a large, partially re-epithelialized (healing) erosion on the rostral mandibular buccal mucosa.



Pig, foot. A ruptured vesicle of the coronary band extends into the interdigital skin.



Pig, foot. Large clefts at the coronary bands precede sloughing of the claws.



Tongue. There are multiple large mucosal erosions and ulcers.



Pig, foot. There is a ruptured vesicle of the caudal-lateral coronary band, with undermining of the heel.



Pig, foot. There is an intact vesicle on the caudal coronary band of the left claw, and a cleft (ruptured vesicle) on the heel bulb of the right claw.



Pig, tongue. Many dry-ruptured vesicles are ruptured and lack fluid.



Sheep, heart. There is a pale area of myocardial necrosis visible from the epicardial surface.

## 2.4 What must I do if I suspect FMD?

Immediately report the suspicion to your nearest State Veterinarian or Animal Health Technician. Do not move animals, products, vehicles or equipment from the property. Do not slaughter or sell affected or exposed animals.

## 2.5 How do I prevent spreading FMD on my farm?

- Isolate sick animals immediately.
- Stop all animal movements.
- Do not share equipment with neighbouring farms.
- Clean and disinfect equipment, vehicles and clothing.
- Restrict visitors.

## 2.6 What documents are required when transporting livestock?

When livestock are moved, the following documents are required:

- Health Attestation (Owner Declaration).
- Livestock Movement Permit (where applicable).
- Proof of identification and branding (Section 6 & 8 Forms of the Stock Theft Act, 1959).
- FMD-specific permits when control measures are in place.

## 2.7 Vehicle hygiene requirements

Vehicles transporting animals must be cleaned and disinfected. All manure and organic material must be removed. Approved disinfectants include citric acid solutions, sodium carbonate, iodine-based disinfectants and other virucidal agents applied according to manufacturer instructions.

# 3. Legal and Compliance Questions

## 3.1 Is Foot-and-Mouth Disease a notifiable disease?

Yes. Foot-and-Mouth Disease is a controlled and notifiable disease under the Animal Diseases Act, 1984 (Act 35 of 1984). Failure to report suspected cases is an offence.

## 3.2 What penalties apply for non-compliance?

Failure to comply with disease control measures, movement restrictions or documentation requirements may result in fines of up to R8,000 or imprisonment of up to two years, or both.

## 3.3 How long must animals be quarantined after movement?

Animals must be quarantined for a minimum of 28 days after movement.

## 4. Reporting and Contact Information

Suspected cases of Foot-and-Mouth Disease must be reported immediately to the nearest State Veterinarian. A person can also contact the Garden Route Emergency Call Centre.

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