

## **Foot And Mouth Disease Update**

April 18, 2001

The information in this fact sheet was compiled through a coordinated project of University of Wisconsin-Extension, Cooperative Extension; Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, Division of Animal Health; University of Wisconsin-Madison – College of Agricultural and Life Sciences and School of Veterinary Medicine; and U.S. Department of Agriculture, APHIS, Veterinary Services.

### **Biosecurity Policy For Extension County Offices, Research Stations, And Campus Animal Facilities**

**Q. What are the recommended precautions for Extension agents or university researchers who visit farms or other animal production and handling facilities?**

A. University Extension agents and researchers should follow basic biosecurity procedures all the time, not just when there is an outbreak of a disease somewhere in the world. The precautions to take depend on the level of risk – how much contact you will have with animals.

People who will be working around animals and who travel from farm to farm should take special precautions to avoid spreading diseases. They should park away from any place where their vehicles might come in contact with disease organisms, animal waste or run-off. They should clean and then disinfect their boots when they arrive and leave; or they should use and leave behind disposable plastic boots. People working around animals that are sick or have a contagious disease should change into clean coveralls before tending other animals

However, visitors to the farm who will have no contact with animals pose little risk. They should clean footwear of dirt and debris before arriving at the farm and again before leaving, but other precautions are probably not necessary so long as Foot and Mouth Disease has not come into the U.S.

Some university and commercial animal facilities have stricter biosecurity restrictions. Always check and adhere to the biosecurity guidelines for a given farm, facility or area.

**Q. Should Extension exclude people from meetings, field days and tours if they have been in FMD-affected countries recently?**

A. There is a small risk that someone who has recently traveled in a region where Foot and Mouth Disease exists may carry the virus on his or her clothing, shoes or body. These travelers should not be near cloven-hoofed animals for at least 7 days after they return. The virus that causes Foot and Mouth Disease dies quickly when exposed to dry air, sunlight, and warm temperatures. If the traveler has changed into clean clothing and footwear and bathed since returning, the chances of carrying the virus into an Extension office or other facility and transferring it to another person, who would then transfer it to an animal, are extremely small – almost zero.

**Q. Should we cancel or move “breakfast on the farm” events? What about plans for county fairs, State Fair, World Dairy Expo? What are the risks? What precautions should be taken?**

A. Unless Foot and Mouth Disease breaks out in the U.S., these events probably can go on as planned, according to most animal health experts. Foot and Mouth Disease is highly contagious from animal to animal, but the chance of a human carrying the virus in – especially when there is no Foot and Mouth Disease in this county – is quite small.

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At farm breakfasts, however, the hosts would be wise to restrict visitors' access to the animals and animal facilities. There is always a risk that diseases will spread at events where animals come together – fairs, cattle shows, sales, and weigh-ins. However, as long as the U.S. remains free of Foot and Mouth Disease, there is little reason to cancel these events. Of course, should the disease come into the U.S., it's likely officials will recommend canceling such events.

### **Q. In case there is an outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease, what will be UW-Extension's role?**

A. As an educational organization, UW-Extension would provide unbiased information and educational programming about the disease situation. Information and educational programs would be developed in partnership with university campuses and state and federal agencies. UW-Extension would provide communications resources and develop information and communications strategies to reach all citizens who might be affected, either directly or indirectly, by an outbreak of this disease.

County-based Extension personnel would coordinate information and educational programs in their communities, advise dairy and livestock producers and community members on how to best cope with the emergency, and assist local emergency government operations.