



# Foot and mouth disease (FMD)

## What is FMD?

- FMD is an acute, highly contagious viral disease that affects cloven hooved wild and domestic animals, including cattle, sheep, pigs, goats, camels, and deer.
- FMD causes high morbidity and low mortality (except in young animals, up to 50% of calves may die).
- FMD is of great concern to Australia's livestock industries, with estimated losses of at least \$80 billion to the Australian economy from a large multi-state outbreak ([ABARES report June 2022](#), page 37).
- **FMD is different to human hand, foot and mouth disease (HFMD).**

## Typical clinical signs

- Lameness
- Blisters often hard to see on the mouth (including tongue and dental pad), toes, heels and mammary glands
- Fever
- Depression
- Salivation
- Reduced appetite



## Detecting FMD in feral pigs

- FMD in feral pigs may be more difficult to detect in animals with darker pigmentation and thicker skin.
- A [Pocket Guide](#) to enhance vesicular disease surveillance in feral pigs has been developed for the US pork industry, with USDA-APHIS support.

## Role of feral pigs in FMD transmission

- Studies overseas indicate that wildlife, including feral pigs, are unlikely to play a significant role in the epidemiology of FMD. Climatic conditions, the capacity of the virus to survive outside the host for extended periods and the density and size of feral pig populations all make it unlikely that they will be involved in the maintenance of a reservoir of FMD infection. Further work would be needed to determine the potential role that Australia's large feral pig population could play in spreading FMD if an outbreak occurs here.
- Movement of infected animals is one of the most important routes of spread between herds and farms. Transmission occurs most readily when animals are in close proximity, such as at watering and feeding points, and congregation points such as stockyards and milking sheds.
- **Contact the national Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline on 1800 675 888 to report any animals behaving abnormally, or with clinical signs of FMD.**

## Current status of FMD

- **Australia is free from FMD.**
- In May 2022, FMD was confirmed in Indonesia.
- It is currently found in many parts of the world, including Africa, the Middle East, Asia and South America.

## How is FMD transmitted?

- Virus is excreted in breath, saliva, mucus, milk and faeces. The virus can be excreted by animals for up to four days before clinical signs appear.
- Animals can become infected through inhalation, ingestion and direct contact.
- It survives well at temperatures below 4°C, and is inactivated as temperatures rise and/or when relative humidity is less than 60%.
- FMD spreads rapidly from one animal to another, especially in cool, damp climates and/or when animals are penned or housed closely together.
- FMD can spread through close contact between animals, be carried short distances by the wind or animal products (wool, hair, grass or straw), or by mud or manure sticking to footwear, contaminated clothing, livestock equipment or vehicle tyres.
- Pigs are 'amplifying hosts' as they can expel very large quantities of FMD virus in their exhaled breath

## Managing your on-farm biosecurity

- Enact your on-farm biosecurity plan.
- Destroy declared pests, including feral pigs, by working collaboratively with others in coordinated programs.
- Prevent access of feral pigs to domestic food scraps, feeding of swill, eating infected carcasses and garbage tips.
- Avoid contact between domestic animals and feral pigs.

## Resources

- [DAWE Foot and Mouth Disease website](#)
- [Emergency Animal Diseases Field Guide for Veterinarians](#)
- [AUSVETPLAN Foot and Mouth Disease Strategy Edition 3.4](#)
- [Farm Biosecurity website](#)