

Don't Carry a Viral Hitchhiker

Foot and Mouth Disease Information for International Travelers

Although the United States has been free from a Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak since 1929, the growth in fast and convenient travel makes this virus a persistent and economic threat to the U.S. livestock industry. Don't bring this devastating virus back with you.

What is Foot and Mouth Disease?

Foot and mouth disease is not a threat to humans. In livestock, the disease causes painful blisters and erosions of tissue in the mouth and feet. Feed consumption is reduced because of painful tongue and mouth lesions, and animals become lame. Abortions often occur. Although mature animals often recover from the disease, milk production and reproduction may never return to normal in recovered animals.

Foot and mouth Disease is the most contagious biological agent known to man. It can travel on the wind for miles. It can travel on clothes, shoes and skin. The virus can survive for up to four days in lungs and nasal passages. Infected meat or other animal products also can spread the disease.

What can I do?

- **Travel light.** The less you bring back, the lower the risk of bringing contamination.
- **Keep biosecurity in mind as you travel.**
 - Don't bring any food back.
 - Wear shoes that can be discarded at the end of your trip.
 - Wash your clothes before returning.
 - Pack clothes that must be dry-cleaned and shoes that can't be discarded in a vinyl or plastic bag to keep them away from the rest of your belongings. Clean them as soon as you return home.
 - Shoes, luggage and personal items (cameras, cell phones, watches, laptops, CD players, etc.) should be wiped with a cloth dampened in a bleach solution (5 tablespoons of household bleach in 1 gallon of water).
- **Stay away from animals.**
 - Avoid farms, sale barns, stockyards, animal laboratories, packing houses, zoos, fairs or other animal facilities for five days before returning to the United States.
 - Stay away from farms, zoos and wildlife for five days after returning.
- **Comply with all U.S. Customs regulations and reply truthfully to all questions from Customs officials.**

What about pets?

Consider leaving your pet at home. Dogs and cats cannot become infected with the virus, but they can mechanically transmit the disease by carrying the virus on their feet, fur and bedding. Keep them away from any clothes or personal items that may have been contaminated. If your pet will travel with you, contact the state veterinarian in your home state for specific requirements. Take the following precautions upon returning:

- The feet, fur and bedding of the pets should be free of any excessive dirt or mud.
- The pet's bedding should be free of any straw, hay or other natural bedding.
- The pet should be bathed as soon as it reaches its final destination.
- The pet may have to be kept in quarantine depending on state regulations.

For more information:

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Foot and mouth disease
information from the USDA:
www.aphis.usda.gov/oa/fmd/