



# EMERGENCY DISEASE PROGRAM ALERT

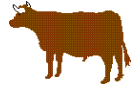
## Animal Health and Food Safety Services

### Animal Health Branch



## Preventing Disease in Animals

### March 2001



#### The Threat of Foreign Animal Diseases

California, with its multi-billion dollar livestock industry, multiple international ports, and more than 6 million international travelers entering each year, is vulnerable to outbreaks of serious foreign animal diseases. In 1971, a southern California outbreak of exotic Newcastle disease in poultry resulted in the depopulation of 12 million birds, the quarantine of 45,000 square miles, and eradication costs of \$56 million. The outbreak was linked to the movement of pet birds from Central America. In 1998, the disease appeared again in California, but prompt action by the owner and a local, small animal veterinarian averted disaster. The outbreak was contained at one small facility with losses limited to 52 game birds.

Animal diseases have devastated livestock industries around the world, including the 1997 classical swine fever outbreak in the Netherlands where 10 million pigs were lost. Foot and mouth disease (FMD) is a persistent, worldwide threat to domestic and wild cloven-hoofed animals. In 1997, Taiwan suffered an FMD outbreak and lost 4 million pigs. The 2001 FMD outbreak in Great Britain, to date, has forced the destruction of over 200,000 cattle, sheep, and pigs at the cost of billions. If FMD were to enter California, millions of animals could be affected with billions of dollars in losses. These are only a few examples of the devastating animal welfare and economic consequences that result when foreign animal diseases are introduced into susceptible livestock and poultry populations. Preventive measures are crucial to safeguard California's animals and economy.

#### Preventing Introduction of Foreign Animal Diseases

The California Department of Food and Agriculture and the United States Department of Agriculture, along with associated state and federal veterinary diagnostic laboratories, are preparing IN ADVANCE to prevent and respond to the introduction of serious foreign animal diseases.

The U.S. and California programs closely monitor and regulate the movement of livestock. Despite these efforts to prevent the introduction of disease and pests and to ensure the importation of only healthy livestock, the risk is *always present*. Viruses, bacteria, and pests do not respect borders and are capable of entering on imported animals and travelers' clothing, bodies, and possessions. The illegal smuggling of animal food products also poses serious risk.

In the face of ongoing outbreaks in other countries, livestock producers and foreign travelers and visitors are urged to take special precautions to prevent the introduction and establishment of animal diseases into the US:

- Foreign travelers should always declare on their Customs form if they have been on a farm or in contact with livestock; and always declare the presence of any meat or dairy products.
- Ask foreign visitors to provide information about recent farm and animal contacts and the animal disease status of countries they have been in.
- If possible, exclude foreign visitors from livestock facilities for at least five (5) days after arrival in the U.S.
- Do not permit clothing, shoes or other articles (such as luggage, cameras, jewelry, and watches) that have been in affected countries to enter livestock facilities.
- Keep clean protective clothing and footwear available. Require visitors to wear these items and thoroughly wash their hands prior to entering a livestock facility.
- Do not allow meat or animal products from FMD-infected countries to enter livestock facilities.
- Discourage close contact or handling of animals by foreign visitors.
- If traveling to an affected foreign country, carefully wash and disinfect all clothing and shoes upon return to the U.S.
- Learn about animal disease outbreaks by visiting the Organization International des Epizooties at [www.oie.int](http://www.oie.int).

## Recognizing, Reporting, and Responding to a Foreign Animal Disease

Early recognition of foreign animal disease is the key to containing an outbreak. Immediate response is crucial. The first 24 hours are the most important in stopping the spread of a disease or pest. Laboratory fees for services needed to investigate possible foreign animal diseases or pests will be waived, so there is *no cost to the producer*.

### Potential Signs of Foreign Animal Disease

Sudden, unexplained death loss in the herd or flock.  
Severe illness affecting a high percentage of the animals in a herd, flock, or region.  
Blistering around an animal's mouth, nose, teats, or hooves.  
Unusual ticks or maggots.  
Staggering, falling, or other central nervous system disorders.

If you recognize signs of foreign animal disease, report them immediately to your veterinarian first, then your CDFA Animal Health Branch District office!

If you learn that illegal animals or animal food products are being smuggled into the state, report it to animal health officials (you may remain anonymous). By reporting, you help protect California livestock from the threat of animal disease.

### Biosecurity is the Key!

Routine precautions taken to prevent the entry of foreign animal diseases onto farms and ranches have the added benefit of preventing the entry of serious domestic diseases. A biosecurity plan is the key to safeguarding animal health. The plan should minimize direct animal-to-animal transmission of disease and also transmission from indirect sources. Recognize that new herd or flock additions, wildlife, pets, rodents, and insects may carry disease causing organisms onto an animal facility. People and inanimate objects deserve special attention in a biosecurity plan. People traffic should be limited and all who come on the facility should follow hygienic practices. This may be as simple as washing the hands and wearing protective clothing such as rubber boots and coveralls, or as complex as shower-in, shower-out. Producers should be aware of the important role of inanimate objects in disease transmission. Common objects or substances that may become contaminated include clothing, footwear, vehicles, animal bedding, feed, water, and soil, veterinary equipment, doorknobs, and other frequently handled objects.

If your hands are contaminated, anything you touch can become contaminated. Frequent handwashing is

important, and all farm personnel should have ready access to handwashing facilities and be trained in proper technique. Employee and facility hygiene are important components of a biosecurity plan.

- Ask your veterinarian to assist you in developing a workable biosecurity plan for your facility. Educate your employees about the importance of following the plan.
- Limit the number of visitors to your facility.
- Provide clean coveralls, head covering, and boots for employees and visitors. Facilities may require that employees and visitors shower before and after their visit.
- Establish a traffic pattern for employees and visitors that minimizes their exposure to animals.
- Provide effective boot disinfectant solutions and brushes and dedicated protective clothing at specific sites in the facility.
- Take special precautions when visiting other farms, livestock markets, or livestock fairs and shows. Wear different overalls and boots for these visits, wash your hands frequently, and be careful not to contaminate the inside of your vehicle. Shower and change clothing before returning to your facility.
- Vehicles may carry disease onto facilities. If possible, do not allow trucks and vehicles to enter your facilities. If they must, make sure they are clean on arrival.
- Exhibiting animals is a biosecurity risk. It is not recommended that animals leaving your facility be allowed to return. However, if this occurs, isolate these returning animals as new additions.

### Related materials from Emergency Programs:

Biosecurity Tips: The Role of Fomites in Animal Disease Transmission  
Biosecurity Tips for Foreign Travelers  
Biosecurity Tips: Selection and Use of Surface Disinfectants  
Handwashing – Why, When, How, and with What?

For additional information call:

#### CDFA, Animal Health Branch

Headquarters: (916) 654-1447  
Redding District: (530) 225-2140  
Modesto District: (209) 491-9350  
Tulare District: (559) 685-3500  
Ontario District: (909) 947-4462

**USDA-VS Area Office** (916) 854-3900

Or visit the Emergency Programs website at:  
[http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/animal/animal\\_health/ahweb/emergency%20program.htm](http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/animal/animal_health/ahweb/emergency%20program.htm)