

SA blocks UK meat after foot and mouth outbreak

The South African government has confirmed that until further notice, no veterinary import permit will be issued for cloven-hoofed animals and products derived there-of originating from the United Kingdom.

By [Michael Appel](#) 7 Aug 2007

En route consignments will be detained at the ports of entry and unused veterinary import permits will be cancelled, following an outbreak of foot and mouth disease (FMD) in the UK.

Animal products subjected to a process complying with international requirements to ensure the satisfactory inactivation of the FMD virus are excluded from the suspension.

South Africa's Department of Agriculture has in turn, welcomed the self-imposed embargo by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) of the UK following the outbreak.

The British Government placed the farm where the latest cases emerged, and the surrounding area in Surrey, under quarantine to contain the disease since its incidence was confirmed there last week.

South Africa has surveillance and control programmes in place for FMD and earned the international free from FMD status from the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) through years of dedicated animal disease control.

No animal or animal product - including samples - may be imported without a veterinary import permit and consignments of animals or animal products must be cleared at the port of entry by officials of the Department of Agriculture.

The last outbreak of foot and mouth occurred in the United Kingdom in 2001, and saw over 2,000 cases in farms throughout the countryside.

The outbreak resulted in the slaughtering of about seven million sheep and cattle to halt the spread of the disease.

FMD is a severe, highly communicable viral disease of cattle and swine. It also affects sheep, goats, deer and other cloven-hoofed animals.

The virus can persist in contaminated fodder and the environment for up to 1 month, depending on the temperature and pH conditions.

There are at least seven separate types and many subtypes of the FMD virus.

Meat animals do not normally regain lost weight for many months. Recovered cows seldom produce milk at their former rates.

FMD can lead to inflammation of the muscular walls of the heart and death, especially in newborn animals.

While the disease is widespread around the world, North America, Central America, Australia, New Zealand

Chile, and some countries in Europe are considered free of FMD.

Various types of FMD virus have been identified in Africa, South America, Asia, and part of Europe.

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