

Preliminary Outbreak Assessment

Foot and Mouth Disease in Germany

13 January 2025

Disease Report

On 10 January 2025, Germany reported Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) to the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH ([WOAH, 2025](#))). Cases in water buffalo in Märkisch-Oderland (3 of a herd of 14 dead), Brandenburg represent the first reports of FMD in Germany since 1988, and the first cases in the European Union (EU) since 2011 (Bulgaria). The German National Reference Laboratory for Foot-and-Mouth Disease the Friedrich-Loeffler-Institut ([FLI](#)) has characterised the causative virus as serotype O, the exact origin and incursion route is currently unknown. The local authorities have taken control and protection measures, including restrictions on susceptible animal movements in Brandenburg and Berlin, a 1km cull around the infected premises, suspending export health certificates and the closure of zoos while further tests are being carried out at the FLI. Additionally, an FLI team is supporting the outbreak investigation on the ground.

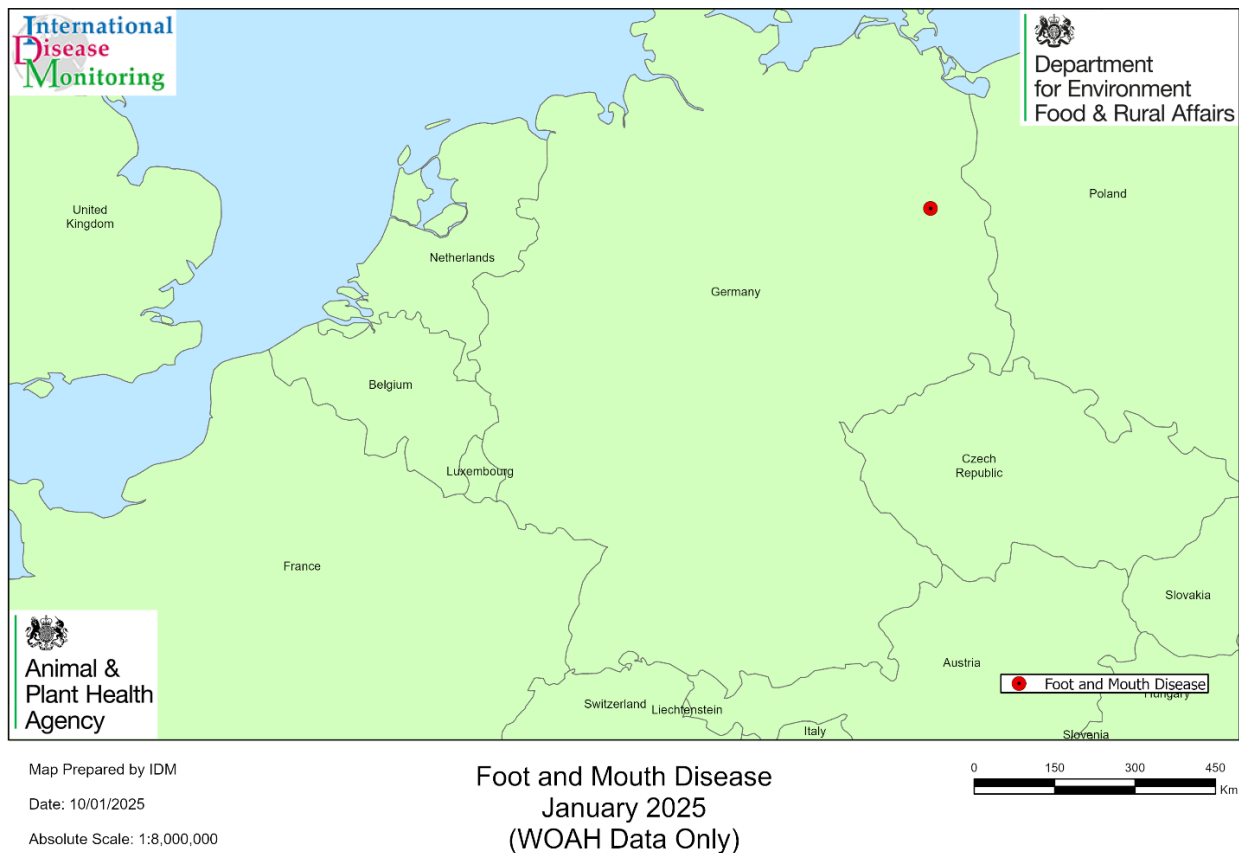


Figure 1: Map showing the location of the outbreak of FMD in northwest Germany

Situation Assessment

Foot and Mouth disease is a viral infection of cloven-hoofed animals and can cause severe clinical outcomes. It is the most economically impactful infection of livestock and any outbreak in livestock or case in wildlife can result in widescale trade restrictions of live animals, germinal products and products of animal origin. This is the first outbreak of FMD in Germany in over 35 years and the first case recorded in the EU since 2011 (in Bulgaria).

Suitable vaccines against FMD are available in the German FMD antigen bank. When needed, the FMD antigen bank can produce the necessary vaccines within a few days. In the case of FMD, it is important that the vaccine is precisely matched, as vaccines against other serotypes do not protect animals.

While the production of the appropriate vaccine is ongoing, the German NRL the Friedrich Löffler Institute ([FLI](#)) has stated that all cloven-hoofed animals in the vicinity of the affected farm will be tested to determine the actual spread of the outbreak and inform any further control measures as well as vaccine response.

While there is currently no evidence of further spread to other animals, epidemiological analysis is ongoing, and precautionary measures are being taken where appropriate. Indeed, authorities said that all susceptible livestock within a 1km radius would be culled as a precaution including around [200 pigs at a farm in Ahrensfelde](#), near where the outbreak was detected. Additionally, 55 sheep and goats and 3 cattle from a farm in Oder-Spree are to be slaughtered on 13 January, none of the animals have shown signs of infection [but farm had obtained hay from the farm in Hönow](#) where the outbreak occurred. The sampling of all establishments within the 10km Restriction Zone (RZ) is ongoing, but so far results have been [negative](#).

A 72-hour ban on transporting cows, pigs, sheep, goats and other animals such as camels and llamas in Brandenburg and Berlin went into force Saturday 11 January, and was [extended a further 48 hours](#) on Monday 13 January. Berlin's two zoos closed as a preventive measure as FMDV can be transmitted as fomites via clothing and vehicles.

Additionally, Germany has banned the gathering of cloven-hoofed animals during International Green Week in Berlin (17 January to 26 January). A [hunting ban](#) has been implemented in the RZ, and sampling of wild cloven-hoofed animals will take place.

Neighbouring and other European countries are on high alert for the disease, with the [Netherlands implementing a national ban on the movement of veal calves](#) (unless they are going to slaughter) and a ban on visitors to veal farms. This comes after more than 3,600 calves have been transported from Brandenburg to the Netherlands since 1 December, via collection centres elsewhere in Germany. These calves are located on more than 125 veal calf farms spread across the Netherlands. The Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (NVWA) is investigating whether there is evidence of FMD on these farms. Meanwhile, other high-risk categories of animals and animal products are being investigated and the Expert Group on Animal Diseases are conducting a risk assessment. The Minister Femke Wiserma has also commissioned the re-testing of samples which

tested negative for bluetongue for FMD as bluetongue can be a differential diagnosis for FMD.

South Korea placed an import ban on German pork on 11 January, the ministry said it will [conduct FMD virus tests on German pork products shipped to the nation since December 27](#). Approximately 360 tons of German pork, shipped between October 26 and November 17, is awaiting quarantine inspection.

WOAH Members' official FMD status map

Last update January 2025

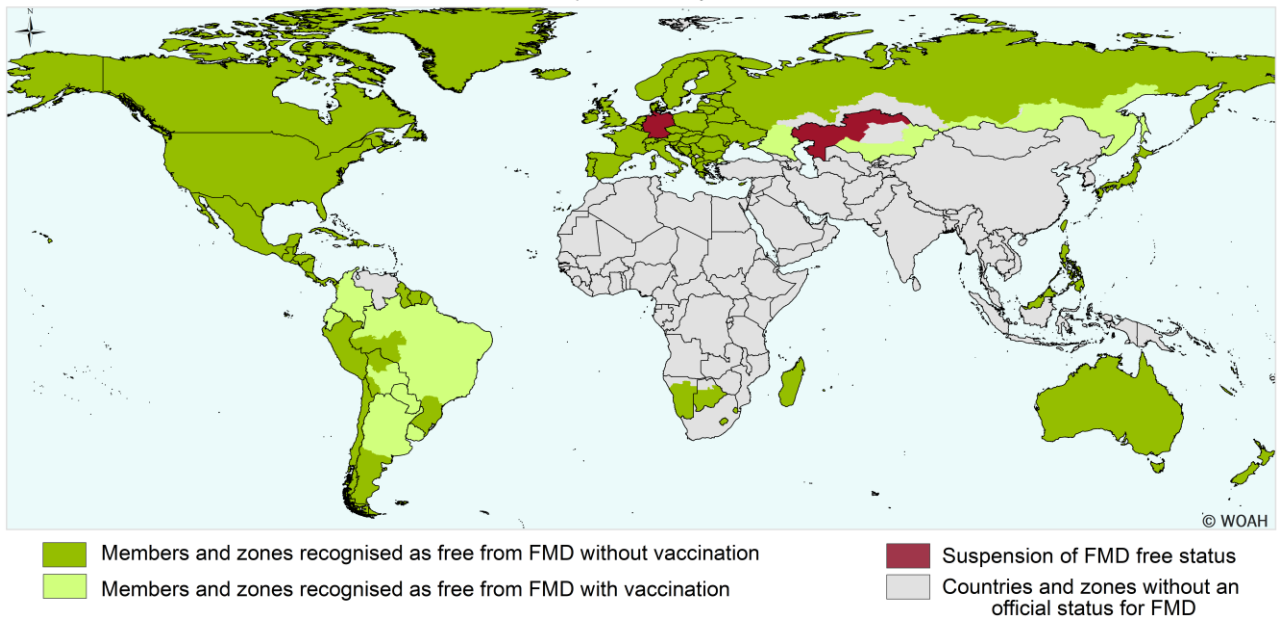


Figure 1 [WOAH Members official FMD status map](#) showing suspension of FMD free status for Germany

At the time of writing, there are no reports that this serotype has an unusual clinical presentation in susceptible species, although we await further information from the German authorities regarding the documented mortality in three animals that were associated with the cases in water buffaloes.

Impacts for Great Britain

FMD is a highly contagious viral disease of cattle, sheep, pigs and other cloven-hoofed animals. It causes very significant economic losses, due to production losses in the affected animals and due to the loss of access to foreign markets for animals, meat and milk for affected countries. FMD does not infect humans and does not pose a food safety risk. While death rates in susceptible species are typically low, the disease can make animals ill with fever, decreased appetite, excessive drooling, blisters, decreased production, and other symptoms.

The virus spreads easily through contact and airborne transmission and can quickly infect entire herds. People can facilitate the spread of the virus through fomites via farming equipment, bedding, shoes, clothing and vehicle tyres that have come into contact with the virus.

There have been no imports of live susceptible animals (including sheep, goats, cattle and pigs) from Germany in two incubation periods (since 12 December to time of writing, as per the standard tracing approach). Imports of bluetongue susceptible species (such as sheep and cattle) from Germany have been suspended since October 2023. From 10 January, the import of all live ungulates and FMD-susceptible species has been restricted. Illegal trade in live animals of FMD susceptible species from any affected areas to Great Britain is less likely due to the logistics, but it cannot entirely be ruled out. As the situation is emerging, there is additional uncertainty regarding how far disease has spread before detection.

Germinal products, products of animal origin (POAO) and animal by-products (ABP) from susceptible species from Germany are considered a risk for FMD transmission. Any consignments imported from Germany since 12 December are being traced. Further consignments are restricted unless processed with a treatment that sufficiently mitigates FMDV (applicable to POAO and ABP only, all germinal products are restricted), so that the material is not considered a risk.

Following the spread of African swine fever through the region, personal imports of pork or pork products legally must be under 2kg and commercially packaged and stamped since September 2024. Similarly, following outbreaks of peste des petits ruminant (PPR) in the EU, meat and milk produced by sheep and goats from Germany must be commercially packaged and stamped since August 2024. Further restrictions of personal imports of commodities from susceptible animals will be suspended from Germany in due course, subject to the exemptions for infant milk, medical foods and certain composite products as set out in Annex III of [Regulation 2019/2122](#). Live animals, germinal products and untreated wool, hair, skins and hides are not permitted for personal import under separate rules.

Feed and bedding (hay and straw) represent a risk of fomite transmission. There have been no records of imports of hay and straw since 1 January 2024. From 10 January, the import of hay and straw that has not been processed with a treatment that mitigates FMD has been restricted.

Illegal trade of POAO is difficult to quantify but given the proximity to Germany and close connections with large movements of workers, tourists and at present, refugees, vigilance along all the neighbouring countries should be heightened at present.

Vehicles, farming equipment and people represent a risk of fomite transmission from regions with high levels of infection, possibly on vehicles or people who have visited livestock in the region. Therefore, maintaining biosecurity for returning vehicles, equipment, and workers visiting livestock premises is paramount.

Airborne transmission has also been implicated in the spread of FMDV, most likely plumes from pigs during the acute stages of disease, over long (up to 50km over land and 200km over water) and short distances (within and between neighbouring premises within 2km of each other). Currently, the FMD outbreak in Germany is well over 800km away from Great Britain, and there is considered to be no risk to Great Britain or the United Kingdom from airborne transmission.

Conclusion

The detection of FMD virus serotype-O in Europe, where there is no vaccination coverage is of great concern. The events highlight how this virus can make significant and unexpected jumps, often through trade and movements of people, animals and animal products, and there is a need for continued vigilance. It is currently unclear how disease translocated to Germany, and understanding how many premises have been affected or whether virus has infected local wildlife such as wild boar or deer is of highest priority.

On the basis of the multiple pathways for FMDV to spread, we therefore consider there to be an increase in the risk of incursion of FMD to the UK and risk level has therefore increased to **medium** during this period of uncertainty.

The risk from illegal imports is difficult to quantify but travellers are reminded that when returning from Germany and other third country areas where ASF or FMD are present, who bring meat or dairy products into the UK can face prosecution and a large fine.

We will continue to monitor the situation and remind livestock keepers of the importance of maintaining strict on-farm biosecurity, compliance with the swill feeding ban, and the reporting of all suspicions of notifiable disease promptly.

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