

Updated Outbreak Assessment #2

Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) in Hungary and Slovakia

27 March 2025

Disease Report

Since our previous outbreak assessment on 7 March, a further outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) has been reported in Hungary and this disease has been reported for the first time in Slovakia since 1974. On 23 March 2025, Slovakia reported three outbreaks of FMD to the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH ([WOAH, 2025](#))). These outbreaks were reported in Dunajská Streda, southern Slovakia in domestic dairy cattle. On 25 March, Slovakia reported a further outbreak in the same district. These cases were initially identified as part of the clinical inspections being conducted due to the surveillance zone generated by the initial outbreak in Hungary entering Slovakian territory. Clinical signs of FMD such as fever and lesions in the mouth and on the udders were present on these three initial farms. Confirmatory testing was carried out, confirming serotype O/ME-SA/PanAsia-2, which is 100% identical (at the level of VP1 sequence) to the virus recovered from the first outbreak in Hungary. The source is not currently known, though epidemiological investigations are underway. On 26 March, Hungary confirmed a second outbreak in Levél, around 40km away from the initial outbreak. All of the confirmed outbreaks so far have been reported in cattle premises.

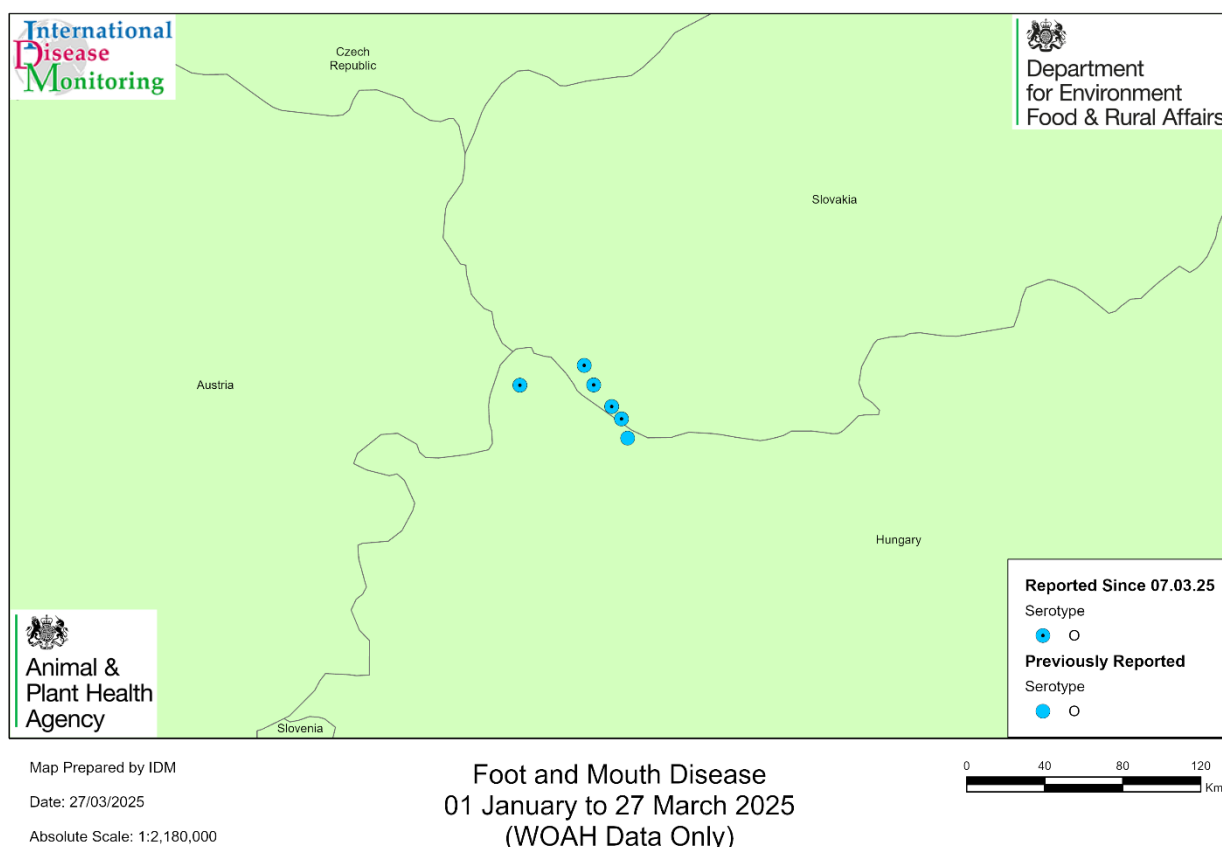


Figure 1: Map showing the locations of the outbreaks of FMD in Hungary and Slovakia.

Situation Assessment

FMD 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. Slovakia is the third European country to report FMD this year. The outbreak in [Germany](#) (serotype O but a different lineage), detected in January 2025, was the first case recorded in the EU since 2011 (in Bulgaria).

Following sequencing, [the EU reference laboratory](#) confirmed serotype-O (O/ME-SA/PanAsia2/PUN-16 [aka ANT-10] lineage) in Hungary and Slovakia, with identical sequences. The sequence is close to virus from Pakistan in 2017 and 2018 and a virus collected in Türkiye in 2014, although the exact origin and incursion route remains unknown.

Neighbouring and other European countries remain on high alert for the disease. Ukraine have implemented measures regarding personal imports of food products from [Slovakia](#) and [Hungary](#). [Czech Republic](#) and [Romania](#) have also banned imports of live susceptible animals and products from Slovakia and Hungary.

Hungary

Following our [preliminary outbreak assessment](#), Hungary has reported a further outbreak of FMD in a dairy cattle herd in Levél. Both outbreaks in Hungary have been reported on dairy cattle farms. Clinical signs such as salivation and mouth lesions appeared in the herd on 25 March and FMD was later confirmed by PCR testing the following day. [Vaccination to minimise virus shedding](#) has begun, and the Hungarian government announced that the slaughter of animals, including vaccinated animals, will commence within a few days. The Hungarian government received [10,000 doses of the suppressive vaccine from Germany](#). The government are advising [at home slaughter](#) to help prevent the spread of FMD. As of 27 March, 415 farms have been tested for FMD across the country, with only the [two positive reports](#) in total. Strict official measures to prevent further spread of the disease include a ban on hunting in the protection and observation zone, and settlements housing susceptible animals within 10km of outbreaks must slaughter all animals at home by 31 March. These will be sampled and tested. In the affected districts of Győr and Mosonmagyaróvár, a grazing ban has been implemented for susceptible species until at least 9 April 2025, and [all movements are prohibited](#) until 29 March 2025.

Slovakia

Slovakia have reported four outbreaks of FMD in cattle, close to the Hungarian border. Outbreaks have been reported across a range of farming premises, affecting dairy cows, calves, heifers and bulls. The first three outbreaks were confirmed on 21 March and emergency measures implemented immediately. A fourth FMD outbreak was reported on 25 March. Control measures include a ban on the use of forests in affected districts, a hunting ban, and a ban on the movement of susceptible animals and by-products within the restriction zone. Slovakia is also administering a vaccine to reduce shedding of the virus in densely populated areas prior to the culling of animals. The suppressive vaccine [was delivered to Slovakia](#) the day after confirmation, and they finished emergency vaccination the same day. All susceptible animals within 3km of the affected farms will be culled. [The EU Reference Laboratory for FMD](#) confirmed that the FMD virus from samples taken in Slovakia, fully matches the virus detected in Hungary.

Additional control measures in Austria and Czech Republic

Due to the second outbreak in Hungary, in close proximity to the Austria-Hungarian border, Austria have implemented an extended surveillance zone. Farms with susceptible animals are being inspected by authorities, and animals will be sampled on a random basis. According to [PAFF presentations](#), susceptible domestic livestock animal populations in the surveillance zone is low, with only 11 premises being present. Measures within the surveillance zone include a ban on movements in and out of the zone, a ban on hunting, and a ban on markets and animal shows with susceptible animals. Owners of susceptible animals within the zone are reminded to be vigilant and report any signs of illnesses, keep records of visits, reduce the number of human visits and take precautions to prevent susceptible stock coming into contact with wild animals.

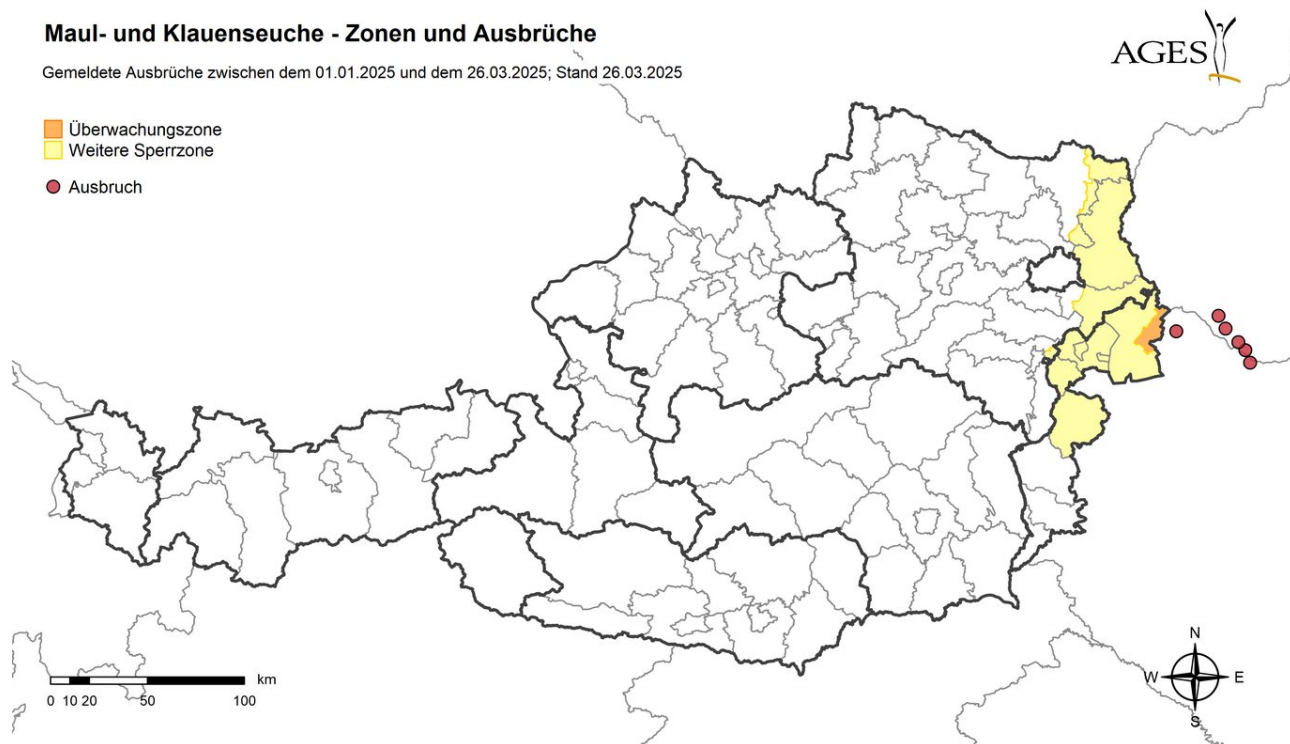


Figure 2: Map displaying surveillance zone (orange) and additional restriction zone (yellow) in Austria. Outbreaks in Hungary and Slovakia are marked with a red circle. [AGES \(Austrian Agency for Health and Food Safety\)](#).

Czechia have implemented [several control measures](#) to help prevent FMD entering the country. Measures include checks on animal transports and proof of disinfection of vehicles transporting animals from Slovakia and Hungary. Persons who have been within the restriction zones in Hungary and Slovakia in the last 21 days are prohibited from entering farms and facilities housing susceptible animals in Czechia. Movements of live animals, germinal products, animal by-products and uncooked animal products from Hungary and Slovakia to Czechia is prohibited. Designated vehicles, not carrying live susceptible animals or prohibited products, over 3.5 tonnes are allowed to cross the border from Slovakia through designated border crossings. Prior to entry, the vehicles will be disinfected by passing through a disinfection belt. Czechia has also banned the import of live susceptible animals from two states in Austria (Burgenland and Lower Austria). Trucks that are carrying live susceptible animals through these states into Czechia will only be able to do so via two designated border crossings where the vehicles will undergo disinfection. A ban of unauthorised persons onto farms housing susceptible species in the regions of Moravian-Silesian, Zlín and South Moravian, which are closest regions to Slovakia and Austria, will also come into place from 28 March.

WOAH Members' official FMD status map

Last update March 2025

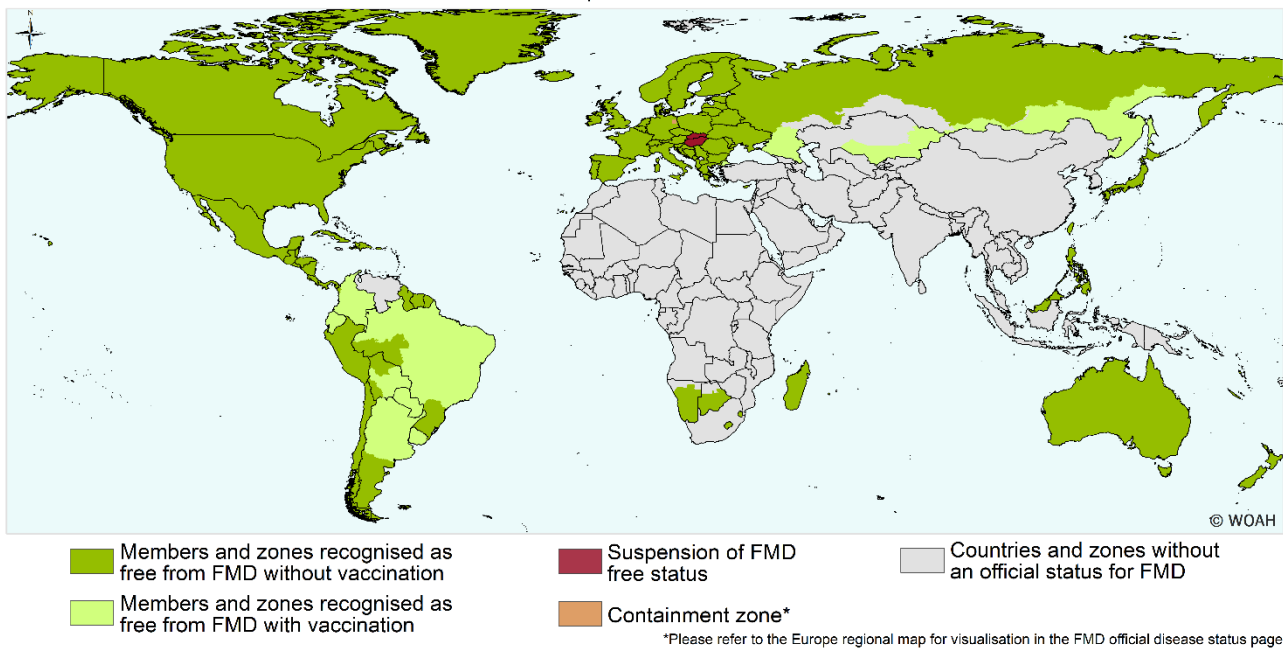


Figure 3: [WOAH Members official FMD status map](#) showing suspension of FMD free status for Hungary and Slovakia, with a containment zone for Germany

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 FMD susceptible animals (including sheep, goats, cattle and pigs) from Hungary and Slovakia since 7 February (covering 2 incubation periods, as per the standard approach to tracing imports). The import of all live ungulates and FMD-susceptible species from Hungary and Slovakia have been temporarily suspended.

Illegal trade in live animals of FMD susceptible species from any affected areas to Great Britain is less likely due to 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 Hungary and Slovakia are considered a risk for FMD transmission. Any consignments imported from Hungary and Slovakia since 7 February 2025 are being traced. Further consignments were restricted from 7 March 2025 unless processed with a treatment that sufficiently mitigates FMDV (applicable to POAO and ABP only, all germinal products are restricted).

Following the spread of African swine fever through the European Union, 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, ovine and caprine meat produced by sheep and goats from Hungary must be commercially packaged and stamped since 31 January 2024. No ovine or caprine milk and milk products are permitted for personal import from Hungary. Personal imports of commodities from susceptible animals are suspended from Hungary, 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. Investigations are ongoing regarding potential imports of hay and straw since 7 February. From 7 March, the import of hay and straw has been restricted from both Hungary and Slovakia.

From 27 March, due to the proximity of the second outbreak in Hungary to the Austrian border, these restrictions apply to the entire territory of Austria.

Illegal trade of POAO is difficult to quantify but given the recent jumps in FMD and those previously observed in African Swine Fever, along with movements of workers, tourists and at present, refugees, vigilance 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.

Conclusion

The detection of FMD virus in a third European country in a short timeframe and a further jump in Hungary 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 still unclear how disease translocated to Hungary and Slovakia, and understanding how many premises have been affected or whether virus has infected local wildlife in both Hungary and Slovakia, such as wild boar or deer, is of highest priority.

We consider the risk of incursion of FMD to the UK is maintained at **medium** (event occurs often) during this period of uncertainty.

The risk from illegal imports is difficult to quantify but travellers are reminded that when returning from Hungary, Slovakia, Germany, Austria 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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