## Updated Outbreak Assessment #4

# Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) in Hungary and Slovakia

5 June 2025

## **Disease Report**

Since our previous outbreak assessment on 7 May, there have been no further outbreaks of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) reported in Hungary or Slovakia. The last reported outbreak was on 17 April in Hungary.

All affected farms have been depopulated, with preliminary cleansing and disinfection finished, while final cleansing and disinfection is ongoing. The Further Restricted Zones (FRZs) have been lifted as of 5 June.

Whole Genome Sequencing data has now been <u>analysed</u> by the EU reference laboratory (EURL), highlighting the presence of a single putative common ancestor providing evidence for a single introduction of the virus.

The initial source and risk pathway for incursion remains unresolved, though epidemiological investigations are underway, and human factors (visits, construction and farm workers, milk tank collections) have been implicated in the further spread of FMDV between the affected farms, while wind-borne transmission has also been suggested as a mechanism of spread, despite the lack of reports of infection in farms other than large commercial dairy farms.



**Figure 1:** Map showing the locations of the outbreaks of FMD in Hungary and Slovakia, close to the Hungarian and Slovakian borders.

## **Situation Assessment**

FMD is a viral infection of cloven-hoofed animals that 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.

Following sequencing, <u>the EURL</u> confirmed serotype-O (O/ME-SA/PanAsia2/PUN-16 [aka ANT-10] lineage) in Hungary and Slovakia, with identical VP1 sequences. This sequence is closely related to viruses from Pakistan in 2017 and 2018 and to a virus collected in Türkiye in 2024, although the exact origin and incursion route remains unknown. Whole genome sequencing has been used to construct the transmission pathways between the affected farms in Hungary and Slovakia.

Though outbreaks have not been reported in Hungary and Slovakia for 7 weeks, neighbouring and other European countries remain on alert for the disease.

#### Hungary

Hungary has reported a total of 5 outbreaks of FMD in commercial dairy cattle since the first outbreak on 7 March 2025. The last of these was on 17 April and was considered a contact holding to earlier primary outbreaks in Hungary, having tested negative on the 11 March and subsequently 23 March, with two cattle tested positive on 17 April. The Protection and Surveillance Zones around this outbreak were lifted on 2 June, with the FRZ lifted on 5 June.

Hungary has been undertaking a large campaign to engage with the press and the public regarding FMD.

As of 16 May, there have been 2,492 sampling visits to livestock premises for FMD across the country, and 3,951 wild game tested. Following tracing activities, 158 holdings have been identified as contact premises and have undergone immediate slaughter. Many of these are understood to be non-commercial holdings. Criteria considered for contact holdings were direct contact (live animals), rendering plant trucks, milk collecting trucks, drivers of milk collecting trucks, milk production company, bedding transport, transport of live animals, workers, and insemination. Contact holdings have housed cattle, pigs, goats, sheep and fallow deer.

#### Slovakia

<u>Slovakia</u> reported 6 outbreaks of FMD in commercial dairy cattle, with the last outbreak confirmed on 4 April. As of 19 May, 2,175 holdings have been tested (35,233 samples) and 1,522 samples from wild animals have been tested from across the country. The last Surveillance Zone was lifted on 5 June.

From 21 May, disease control measures include controlling the entry of people into farms, keeping records of people and vehicles entering and exiting the holding and ensuring that people and equipment are suitably clean across the country. Regarding animals moving to slaughter, animals in the whole territory must be clinically examined before movement, with repeated examinations of animals from Bratislavský, Trnavský and Nitriansky regions. If animals are moved outside of Slovakia for slaughter, a proportion of animals from Bratislavský, Trnavský and Nitriansky regions will have blood samples taken (sample size to be calculated assuming a 10% prevalence and 95% confidence level).

For movements between holdings, the movement must be direct, with a clinical inspection prior to movement as well as a negative serological test result for FMD and cleansing and disinfection of transport.

Zoos and similar establishments such as circuses are permitted to open under certain conditions. These include following biosecurity measures, vehicles and people (shoes and hands) must be disinfected and no direct contact between visitors and animals is allowed.

It is not known whether these additional measures will now be lifted, as the surveillance zones are no longer in place.

#### Additional control measures in Austria and Czechia

Due to outbreaks in the region, in close proximity to the Austria-Hungarian border, Austria implemented an extended surveillance zone. Farms with susceptible animals were being inspected by authorities, and animals were being sampled on a random basis.

From 22 May, the vehicle checks carried out by police ended, and vehicles over 3.5 tons driving into <u>Czechia</u> from Slovakia were able to use any border crossing without the need for disinfection. However, random road checks in the interior of the country continue to be carried out.

As of 29 May in Czechia, a further 265 milk samples have been taken as part of the monitoring, in addition to the 1,146 samples already been tested for FMD virus (all negative). Additional, milk samples are being taken from 117 farms from three regions neighbouring Slovakia (South Moravian, Zlín and Moravian-Silesian regions) in cooperation with 14 dairies.

Additionally, as part of the monitoring carried out on susceptible wild game in selected hunting grounds in the districts of Břeclav and Hodonín near the border with Slovakia, samples from 147 animals have been taken and tested so far, with negative results.

From 5 June, it is no longer necessary to keep records of vehicle and person entering farms, or to require confirmation of vehicle disinfection. Nevertheless, the state recommends that farmers continue to adhere to high-level biosecurity measures. Preventive testing of milk and game in border regions will also continue

Neither Austria nor Czechia have reported FMD.

### Impacts for Great Britain

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, Slovakia, and Austria remain 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 was emerging, there was additional uncertainty regarding how far disease has spread before detection, however the sequencing results do suggest that the index case was detected as the first outbreak and although there was some cross border transmission, the close proximity of the outbreaks in both Hungary and Slovakia and the country wide surveillance carried out does suggest that the spread was contained.

Consignments of germinal products, products of animal origin (POAO) and animal byproducts (ABP) from susceptible species from Hungary, Slovakia, and Austria remain restricted unless processed with a treatment that sufficiently mitigates FMDV (applicable to POAO and ABP only, all germinal products are restricted).

Restrictions remain in place on commercial imports of live animals, germplasm, fresh meat, meat products, milk and milk products, animal-by-products, and hay and straw from the entire territories of Austria, Hungary and Slovakia. Additionally, from <u>12 April 2025</u>, it has been illegal for travellers to bring cattle, sheep, goat, and pig meat, as well as dairy products, from EU countries into Great Britain for personal use (personal imports) with very <u>limited exemptions</u>. This is to cover the uncertainty around the reports of aerosol transmission taking place early in the outbreaks and the immediate slaughter of non-commercial animals surrounding the infected establishments. Live animals, germinal products and untreated wool, hair, skins and hides are not permitted for personal import under separate rules.

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. It has therefore been encouraging that strict measures were used for the inter-EU movement of vehicles from restricted regions and the lack of further spread into neighbouring countries.

## Conclusion

There have been no further reports of FMD in the region, with the last report in Hungary on 17 April. The FRZ's have been lifted in Hungary and Protection and Surveillance Zones have been lifted in Slovakia.

Both countries have undertaken extensive surveillance in commercial domestic and wildlife populations. The lack of reports since mid-April is encouraging, and the recent genomic analysis indicating that there was only one incursion of the virus reduces the uncertainty regarding of potential spread and scope for further outbreaks.

While this is promising, it has been known that FMD virus can remain undetected for several months (for example in <u>Bulgaria in 2011</u>). Additionally, the initial source of incursion remains unknown and the reports that windborne transmission was involved in the movement of virus between farms is a concern that other non-commercial holdings may have been infected and animals sent to slaughter.

Therefore, 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 is decreasing with the longer amount of time with no new detections and will likely reduce to **low** if the current trajectory continues. However, we are also mindful that these cases in Hungary and Slovakia are the second incursion of FMD into the EU, after that which occurred in Germany. This is alongside other recent outbreaks of transboundary animal diseases, such as African swine fever, sheep pox and peste de petits ruminants. Human mediated routes are therefore still a concern for the animal health status of the entire region.

The risk from illegal imports is always difficult to quantify but travellers are reminded that when returning from Europe and other third country areas, those 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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