Updated Outbreak Assessment

Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) in the Middle East and Cyprus #4

23 December 2025

Disease report

Following the outbreaks of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) in Türkiye, and other countries in Western Asia earlier this year caused by serotype SAT1, this serotype has now been detected in northern Cyprus. The last outbreak reported from Cyprus was serotype O in 2007. Serotype SAT 1 is exotic to Western Asia and the Caucasus region and has potential to spread quickly since livestock are immunologically naïve and highly susceptible to infection with this serotype. Since our last update, Türkiye has reported an additional 639 SAT1 FMD outbreaks to the EU Animal Disease information system.

Lebanon has also submitted two reports of FMD outbreaks to WOAH for 41 outbreaks in the country. The serotype of these outbreaks is pending (WAHIS Event 7086).

While the continued spread of FMD in the region is concerning, considering the geographical distance of the outbreaks to Great Britain means that the risk of incursion of FMD from this area remains at **low (rare but can occur)**.

Figure 1: Map of Western Asia showing the location of FMD outbreaks from 29 October to 23 December (Empres-i). The outbreak in Lapithos, Cyprus is not included on the map.

Situation assessment

Cyprus

Media first reported the suspicion of foot and mouth disease in the northern territory of Cyprus on 14 December (kibrisgazetesi.com). The outbreak occurred in the village of Lapathos in Famagusta, in the northeast of the island. Confirmation of FMD from samples taken occurred shortly thereafter and later was determined to be the SAT1 serotype (kibrisgazetesi.com). 200,000 doses of FMD vaccine were procured from Türkiye to support disease control (sigmalive.com). Media reported that the veterinary department of northern Cyprus decided to introduce a movement ban for all breeding cattle and sheep across the country for one month. Additionally, quarantine, vaccination, disinfection, and biosecurity measures have been introduced (cyprus-mail.com). Disinfection mats have been set up along routes where animals may be transported (dialogos.com).

On 16 December, media reported on a second FMD outbreak in Lapithos in the north of the country. Vaccination of 13,000 animals in the region is reported to begin soon (cyprus-mail.com). On 19 December, the EU Veterinary Emergency Team arrived in Cyprus to investigate the incident and support the response (ant1live.com).

According to media reports, the veterinary services for the south of Cyprus have not reported any cases or suspicions of FMD. Following EU veterinary legislation, there are no plans to preventatively vaccinate in the area (dialogos.com).

Cyprus last experienced an outbreak of FMD in 2007 due to serotype O.

Lebanon

On 19 December 2025, Lebanon reported two outbreaks of FMD to WOAH (WAHIS event 7086). The serotype is still being determined. The outbreaks started on 22 November 2025. One of the reports was of a cluster of 40 outbreaks affecting 5,000 animals. The outbreaks were reported in the media as early as 9 December 2025 (lebanon24.com). Vaccination campaigns have begun in the affected areas (lbcgroup.tv).

Lebanon last experienced outbreaks of FMD in 2009, when outbreaks occurred due to serotype A and untyped strains.

Türkiye

Türkiye continues to report a large number of SAT1 outbreaks to ADIS. Since our last assessment, there have been 639 SAT1 outbreaks reported. In total, there have been 1,144 SAT1 outbreaks and 202 untyped outbreaks reported in 2025.

Impact 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 signs.

The virus spreads easily through direct and indirect contact as well as airborne transmission and can quickly infect entire herds. People can facilitate the spread of the virus through fomites via farming equipment, feed and bedding (like hay and straw), footwear, clothing and vehicle tyres that have come into contact with the virus and via carriage of products of animal origin derived from infected animals.

Conclusion

For the first time, SAT1 FMD has been reported in Cyprus. Lebanon is also experiencing FMD outbreaks for the first time since 2009, although the serotype is currently unknown. This, combined with the number of SAT1 outbreaks reported in Türkiye, is particularly concerning. These transboundary movements illustrate the high transmissibility and destructive potential of FMD, reinforcing the urgent need for control and prevention strategies to curb its spread.

Earlier in the year, the FAO alerted countries in the Near East and Western Eurasia regions to be on high alert as the SAT1 serotype is not usually present in these regions. Due to the absence of natural or vaccine-induced immunity in these animals, the disease has potential to spread quickly across borders and regions, causing significant damage to agriculture and the economy.

While these detections of FMDV SAT1 represent the introduction of an exotic FMDV serotype to Europe, it presents a low risk to Great Britain. There is no trade to Great Britain in live animals or animal products from countries in the region. The risk from illegal imports is difficult to quantify, but travellers from the affected countries and other third country areas who bring meat or dairy products can face prosecution and a large fine.

The risk of introduction of FMD to Great Britain remains at **low.** 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. Swill feeding any animal, whether pigs, poultry, ruminants, or wildlife is illegal and has the potential to cause substantial harm. We would like to emphasise to all keepers of livestock, including smallholders, and the general public to ensure that livestock are not fed catering waste, kitchen scraps or products of animal origin, thereby observing the swill feeding ban. All keepers of livestock, whether commercial holdings or not, should remain vigilant, as with all biosecurity, these measures are only as effective as the people using them, so proper training should be provided.

Authors

Dr Erica Kintz

Megan Arter-Hazzard

Dr Lauren Perrin

Dr Don King

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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at iadm@apha.gov.uk