

Updated Outbreak Assessment #2

Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) in Cyprus and Greece

17 March 2026

Disease report

Greece has confirmed an outbreak of FMD in Pelopi, on the island of Lesbos. The last FMD outbreaks reported from Greece were in 2000 (serotype Asia 1) and from the island of Lesbos in 1994 (serotype O). [According to media reports](#), on 15 March 2026, there were high suspicions of disease in cattle, with precautionary measures implemented including a freeze on exports. FMD infection was later reported to the World Organization for Animal Health on 17 March. The FMDV serotype associated with the case in Greece has not yet been defined. Since our [previous outbreak assessment on 23 February 2026](#), the total number of outbreaks in the Republic of Cyprus is now at 40 ([WAHIS](#)), with media reports noting spread of disease on the island.

While the continued spread of FMD in the region, including outbreaks in a new location is concerning, considering the geographical distance of the outbreaks to Great Britain the risk of incursion of FMD remains at **low (rare but can occur)**.

Situation assessment

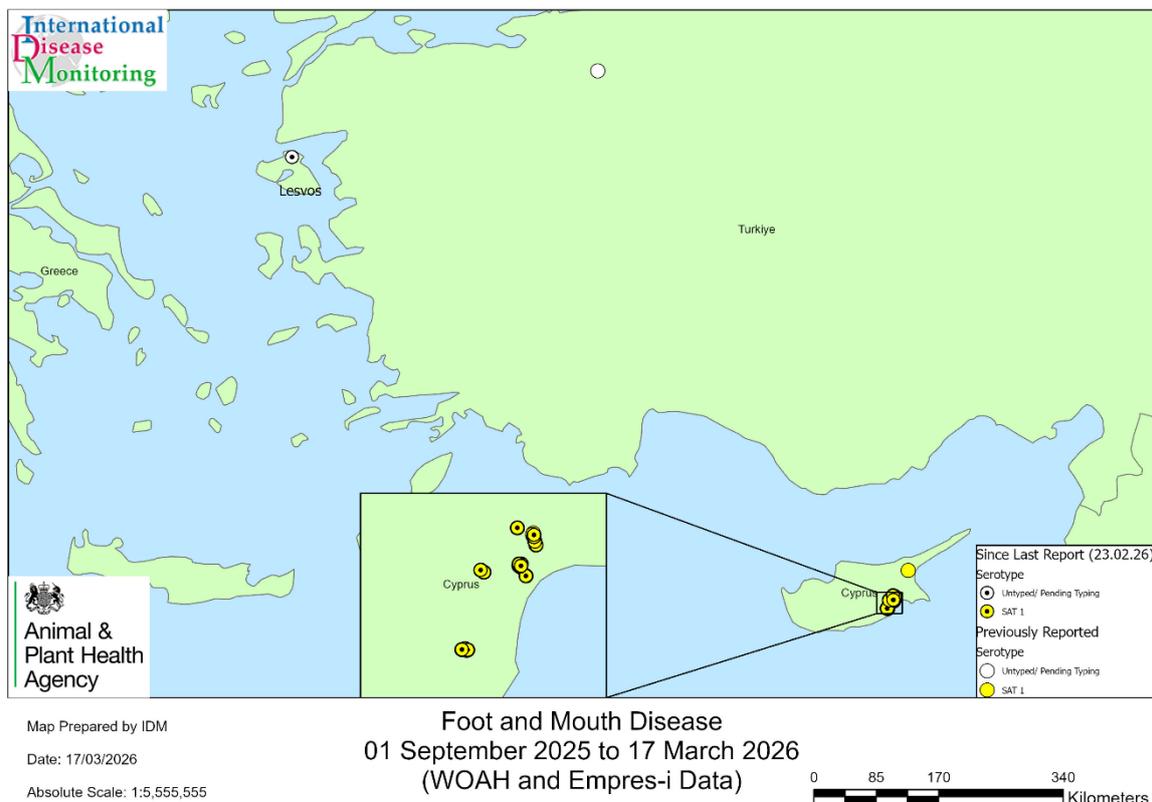


Figure 1: Map displaying the location of FMD outbreaks in Greece and Cyprus. Both WOA and Empres-i data have been used. New outbreaks since our previous assessment on 23 February 2026 are circles with a dot inside, and those without are previously reported.

Greece

On 16 March 2026, [media reports](#) indicated that FMD had been detected in cattle on a farm in Pelopi, northern Lesvos. At the time of writing, the source of introduction is unknown, with the closest outbreaks of FMD being reported in Türkiye, approximately 16km away, where there have been reports of recent cases due to serotypes O, SAT1, SAT2 and untyped or partially typed FMD ([ADIS](#)). According to these reports, the entire Island of Lesvos is under restrictions which include prohibition on the movement of susceptible live animals and products. [A 5km protection zone](#) around the outbreak has been implemented, along with a surveillance zone that covers the island. [Media reports](#) note that increased movements of lambs and goats due to Easter may increase the risk of spread of disease. Testing is ongoing to confirm the serotype ([WAHIS](#)).

Cyprus

The [Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment](#) confirmed the initial outbreak on 20 February on a cattle farm in Livadia, Larnaka. This is located approximately 40km away from the outbreaks confirmed in December 2025 in

Lapathos, Ammochostos, northern Cyprus, and roughly 10km away from Larnaka International Airport (see Figure 1 for map of outbreaks). Since the initial confirmation, the Republic of Cyprus has reported 39 additional outbreaks of FMD SAT1, bringing the total to 40. Outbreaks have been reported on farms containing cattle, sheep, goats, and mixed-herds of sheep and goats. The majority of outbreaks have been confirmed in and surrounding Larnaka, with two now being confirmed in Nicosia, northern-central Cyprus. [From media reports](#), new 3km and 10km protection and surveillance zones have been implemented due to these outbreaks. Following FMD control efforts and surveillance visits, some farms have been [reported in the media](#) to be keeping animals (including FMD susceptible species) illegally as they do not have the correct licence, which could impact control efforts. Additionally, there have been [reports of tensions](#) between the government and farmers due to slaughter policies.

[Since 25 February 2026](#), a 3km protection and 10km surveillance zone have been in place around the initial outbreaks, with a further restricted zone covering the entire country. Measures include a country-wide movement ban for 21 days, a closure of abattoirs, closure of livestock units and a ban on entry into infected or suspected premises ([Cyprus placed under strict quarantine as foot-and-mouth spreads | in-cyprus.com](#)).

A total of 250,000 doses of SAT 1 FMD vaccines were delivered to northern Cyprus from Türkiye, with vaccination underway in the affected village, with plans to extend this to 3km and then 10km around the affected premises. The European Commission have recommended that northern Cyprus undertakes suppressive vaccination on infected farms that are waiting to be culled. In the Republic of Cyprus, 85% of cattle and 45% of sheep and goats have been vaccinated nationwide. There are reports that the Republic is waiting on a shipment of vaccines for pigs from Germany ([Foot-and-mouth disease: 85% of cattle and 45% of sheep and goats vaccinated - Sigmalive.](#))

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.

An [EU wide ban is in place for personal imports](#) of fresh meat, meat products, milk, dairy products, colostrum, colostrum products and certain composite products and animal by-products of ruminant and porcine origin. This is in response to the two previous incursions of FMD that occurred in the EU (Germany and Hungary/Slovakia) during 2025. These special measures were applied from 18 December 2025 until revoked or amended and replaces earlier safeguard

declarations. Live animals, germinal products and untreated wool, hair, skins and hides are not permitted for personal import under separate rules. Those found with these items will need to either surrender them at the border or will have them seized and destroyed.

The FMD 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 since 2000, FMD has been reported in Greece. The introduction of the virus into naïve populations in Greece, along with recent outbreaks of FMD due to serotype SAT1 in Cyprus is 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. With the Easter period approaching, increased movements of people and animals may elevate the risk of FMD spread, and we will continue to monitor the situation closely.

While these detections of FMDV represent the third confirmed and possibly fourth introduction of FMD into Europe in the past fifteen months, it presents a low risk to Great Britain. There have been no imports of live FMD susceptible animals (including sheep, goats, cattle and pigs) or their germplasm from Cyprus since 23 January 2026 and from Greece since 16 February 2026 (covering 2 incubation periods, as per the standard approach to tracing imports). Certain products of animal origin (POAO) and animal by-products (ABP) of FMD-susceptible species from Cyprus and Greece are also considered a risk for FMD transmission. Any consignments imported from Cyprus since 23 January 2026 and from Greece since 16 February 2026 are being traced. The import of all live FMD-susceptible animals and their germplasm from Cyprus and Greece have been temporarily suspended. Imports of relevant POAOs and ABPs from both countries are also temporarily suspended unless processed with a treatment that sufficiently mitigates FMDV. Feed and bedding (hay and straw) represent a risk of fomite transmission. There have been no imports of hay and straw from Cyprus since 23 January 2026 and from Greece since 16 February 2026. The import of hay and straw has been restricted from both Cyprus and Greece. 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. 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.

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 remind all keepers of livestock, including smallholders, and the general public that livestock are not to be 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

Megan Arter-Hazzard

Dr Lauren Perrin

Dr Don King

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