

Preliminary Outbreak Assessment

Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) in China

April 2026

Disease report

On 16 April 2026, Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) serotype SAT 1 was reported in China by WAHIS, representing the [first detection of this serotype in the country \(WAHIS\)](#). The outbreak was initially detected on 28 March 2026 at a livestock market in the Ili Kazakh Prefecture of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in north-western China.

[National authorities](#) have reported a further SAT 1 outbreak in the Wuwei Prefecture, Gansu Province, located in central China ([Empres-i +](#)), however, this outbreak has not yet been reported through WAHIS. The two outbreak locations are separated by an approximately 2000km, raising questions about potential multiple introductions and/or undetected transmission pathways in the country

The emergence of the SAT 1 serotype in a country historically affected by FMD serotypes O and A is concerning since existing vaccination strategies will not provide any cross-protection in susceptible livestock, and there is a risk that SAT 1 will rapidly spread in this immunologically naïve population. Since 2025, SAT 1 has spread to parts of the Middle East and West Asia, where there is co-circulation of SAT 1/I and SAT 1/III topotypes. The topotype responsible for the outbreaks in China has not yet been confirmed ([FAO, 2026](#)).

While the continued spread of FMD SAT 1 into previously unaffected countries is concerning, the risks to Great Britain remain **Low**. However, it is important to consider the highly transmissible nature of FMD and its demonstrated capacity for significant and unexpected long-distance spread, which warrants continued vigilance.

Outbreak assessments on the recent FMD SAT 1 outbreaks have been published throughout the changing situation ([Animal Diseases: International and UK Monitoring](#))

Situation assessment



Figure 1: Map showing the outbreak locations of FMD in the Xinjiang Uyghur region (WAHIS) and the Gansu Province (EMPRES-i).

China

The initial outbreak at the livestock market was confirmed on 28 March 2026 and was later reported to WOAHP on 16 April 2026, involving 142 cases in domestic cattle, with an additional 513 susceptible animals present at the site ([WAHIS](#)), details of the farm or farms related to these individual animals have not been reported. The outbreak occurred in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in north-western China, [an area recognised as a key livestock corridor linking China with Central Asia countries](#). The affected market is approximately 85km from the China-Kazakhstan border.

A second FMD SAT 1 outbreak was reported by national authorities on 2 April 2026, affecting a farm in Gansu Province. This outbreak involved 77 affected cattle, with a further 5715 susceptible animals present ([Empres-i +](#)). The affected holding is approximately 300km from the border with Mongolia.

Local governments are implementing [culling and disinfecting measures](#) in both Xinjiang and Gansu as part of ongoing control efforts. Border patrols have [been ordered to step up](#) to prevent disease entering through smuggling or illegal transport. There are also reports of two vaccines for [SAT 1 receiving emergency veterinary drug approval which are expected to be available within a month](#).

Epidemiological investigations are ongoing, and China's Ministry of Agriculture has stated that the virus is [likely to have entered through the north-west border region](#), which connects China with Central Asian states, Mongolia and Russia ([Eurasianet, 2026](#)).

Prior to these cases, only sporadic outbreaks of FMD due to serotype O and A have been recently reported in China. Historically, circulation has been limited to serotype O (last reported in [November 2025](#)), serotype A () and serotype Asia 1 ([last reported in 2009](#)). China maintains a state-mandated vaccination programme, utilising bivalent or trivalent inactivated vaccines targeting serotypes O, A, and Asia 1, however, these vaccinations do not provide cross-protection for SAT 1, leaving susceptible livestock populations at risk ([PSCC, 2025](#)).

Prior to the current outbreak, FMD was last reported in China on 07 October 2025, when 10 cases of serotype O were detected in domestic cattle at a quarantine station in the Aksu prefecture, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region ([WAHIS](#)).

Surrounding Countries

China shares land borders with 14 countries. Of these, Russia has an official WOAHP status of FMD-free (zones with and without vaccination), and Kazakhstan has FMD-free (with vaccination) zones along the South and Southeast borders. The remaining 12 countries that share land borders with China do not have WOAHP official FMD status.

There has been unofficial [media speculation](#) regarding the disease situation in [Russia](#), prompted by [large-scale culling](#), strict disease control measures and the introduction of temporary import and export restrictions. The disease situation in Russia and surrounding countries is being closely monitored for the release of new official information.

Due to the growing concern of SAT 1 emergence, [Vietnam](#) has begun to develop a response plan, calling for the urgent importation of suitable vaccines as well as domestic vaccine research and development.

Shortages in the global availability of effective SAT 1 vaccines could complicate initiatives to control and limit the spread of SAT 1 in Asia..

SAT 1 expansion

The transboundary spread of FMD SAT 1 is now extending beyond its [historical range](#), resulting in outbreaks in countries that were previously free from this serotype. In February 2026, the FAO produced a rapid risk assessment highlighting the geographic expansion of SAT 1 and concluded that it is very likely to infect livestock in one or more currently unaffected countries in the next three months (March-May 2026).

In response to the evolving situation, WOAHP has issued a [call to action](#), reminding members of their obligation to ensure timely and transparent reporting of outbreaks. WOAHP further recommends regular virus characterisation and genotyping in affected

areas to monitor the evolution and support early detection of SAT 1 incursions. Despite these efforts, there are increasing concerns regarding transparency and the timely sharing of risk information.

While epidemiological investigations remain ongoing, it is difficult to definitively establish routes of incursion into countries that have not previously been affected by this serotype. Potential drivers contributing to [the expanding range](#) of this serotype include formal and informal transboundary animal movement, informal livestock trade, environmental pressures and gaps in existing vaccination strategy ([FAO, 2026](#)).

Viral sequence data has not yet been reported for the cases in China, but other analyses demonstrate that viruses that have caused the SAT1/III outbreaks in West Asia share a close genetic relationship (>99% nt identity) to a virus (called BOT/1/77) that is used as a vaccine master seed. These findings require urgent investigation by the veterinary authorities in the affected countries in West Asia where outbreaks due to this toptotype were first reported to understand whether there has been the escape of a SAT1/III virus into the field, either due to breakdown in biosecurity procedures at a manufacturing site or from an incompletely inactivated vaccine.

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 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.

China is not authorised for the export of fresh or frozen meat of ungulates or live ungulates to Great Britain. Whilst China appears on the fresh meat country listings, the absence of corresponding veterinary certification means it cannot certify for export to Great Britain in practice. For other FMD-susceptible commodities, authorisations are restricted to processed products only. China is authorised for the export of milk and milk products derived from cows, sheep, goats or buffaloes only where these have undergone heat treatment, and for meat products (containing meat, mechanically separated meat or specified offal, where the internal muscle structure has been altered) only where these have been subjected to specific

treatment (processing in a hermetically sealed container to an Fo value of 3 or greater). These authorisations do not permit the export of raw, fresh or frozen meat, and apply solely to products that have undergone treatments intended to mitigate FMD risk.

Furthermore, China does not have an approved Residue Control Plan (RCP) for bovine, milk or porcine commodities, which precludes the export of any FMD-susceptible commodities intended for human consumption, including dairy-containing products where milk is of ruminant origin.

As a consequence, commodities exported from China that remain relevant to FMD pathway considerations are effectively limited to animal by-products not intended for human consumption. China is a large exporter of a range of ungulate-derived ABPs, including gelatine and collagen and their treated raw materials, certain blood products, and other highly refined products.

Imports from China are not routinely traced, on the basis that commodities legally placed on the GB market are expected to have been exported in accordance with approved authorisations and specified treatments.

Conclusion

The detection of FMD serotype SAT-1 represents an important change in the epidemiological situation in China and reflects a wider expansion of the serotype beyond its historical range, into previously unaffected countries. The absence of specific immunity derived from vaccination or prior infection for SAT 1 creates vulnerability in susceptible livestock populations. This increases the risk associated with onward spread of this serotype and complicates the control and mitigation efforts, and potential exacerbation of the disease situation, with a heightened risk of continued spread within Asia.

Current trade rules mitigate the introduction of higher risk commodities arriving such as live susceptible animals and fresh meat into Great Britain.

For Great Britain, the overall risk of incursion from China is **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.

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[Occurrence | World Reference Laboratory for Foot-and-Mouth Disease](#)

[China | World Reference Laboratory for Foot-and-Mouth Disease](#)



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