

Natural Disasters Part 1 of 4**March 2011****□ Britain's Foot-and-Mouth Scourge**

The 19th of February of this year marked 10 years since foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) was discovered in an Essex, England abattoir. Over the ensuing months, some 10 million cows, sheep and pigs were slaughtered in efforts to contain this contagious disease. It also affects goats and deer. Although horses are not affected by FMD, the worldwide equine sector practices precautionary measures. Painful to the animal, as blisters break the surface of the gums, tongue, lips and teats, and between the hooves of cloven-hoof animals, the disease is easily transferred via clothing, feed, vehicles, farm equipment, domestic animals and wild predators.

□ The Threat Remains Close and Real

Although there has been no reported incidence of FMD in Canada for more than 50 years (it is a reportable disease, enacted under the Health of Animals Act) the CFIA (Canadian Food Inspection Agency) remains extremely vigilant. The North American FMD Vaccine Bank was created as a cautionary measure to protect potentially-affected North American animals. In January of this year, Canada, Mexico and the United States provided FMD vaccine to Korea to assist the country with its ongoing outbreak of FMD. Sufficient antigen was provided to manufacture 2.5 million doses of vaccine. Accordingly, replenishment of the FMD Vaccine Bank is currently in place; it is anticipated to return to full supply by the conclusion of this calendar year. The gesture was undertaken to not only assist Korea, but to address the vulnerability of all countries to global biosecurity threats.

In February of this year, the CFIA issued a Notice to Industry which provided the farming community with practical advice, prefaced by the following: "Recognizing the recent pattern of FMD outbreaks in several countries, the [CFIA] is reminding livestock producers of the precautions they can take to protect their animals from serious diseases such as foot-and-mouth disease (FMD)." The CFIA prohibits importation into Canada of susceptible animals or animal products from a country not recognized as FMD-free, unless processed in a manner that destroys the virus.

□ Vivid Memories, Ten Years On

The ten-year mark of Britain's tragic FMD experience was sensed by several people in England, at differing levels of significance. Many report intense visual memories. For several weeks during late winter and early spring of 2001, daily TV news featured burning pyres of animal carcasses, heart-broken farmers and bewildered government officials - images which became indelible in the minds of many. Debates were combatant, as there was no shortage of opinions as to what could or should have been done to stem the slaughter. A national vaccination program may have halted the spread, yet, cost Britain handsomely in lost export revenue. "They say they can't afford to vaccinate them, but, they can afford to kill them" one farmer is reported to have said, searching for the logic.

□ Necessity is the Mother of Invention

For some Brits, the FMD crisis became a radical point of departure in their shopping and dietary habits. Understandably, some urbanites became more appreciative of the contribution made to their daily welfare by their rural brethren. While the high-level debates ensued, and meat prices rose, individuals began to – first individually, and soon collectively – shop locally, frequent farmers' markets and foster communal gardens on an unprecedented scale. Vegetarian selections became more attractive to even the most hard-core human carnivore. Greater interest developed in honing food-shopping skills, reducing food waste, and learning not only how to cook, but, how to enjoy it. Pointedly, British Airways did not offer British beef as an entrée on trans-Atlantic flights for most of that year, and stuck to the safe-bets: chicken and salmon. **FF**

□ Some Websites

<http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/anima/disemala/fmdfa/20110204inde.shtml>

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/animal_health/content/printable_version/fs_fmd_vaccine_07.pdf

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