

## **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON FOOT-AND-MOUTH DISEASE**

The following is from the March 23, 2001 issue of the Texas Cattle Feeders Association Newsletter. It should be informative to Tennessee cattle producers.

**Q-- What is foot-and-mouth disease?**

**A--** Foot-and-mouth (FMD), also known as hoof-and-mouth disease, is a highly contagious viral disease that affects cloven-hoofed animals such as cattle, swine, sheep, goats and deer. It does not affect humans. There are seven types of the virus--immunity to one does not protect animals from the others. Average incubation is three to eight days, but can be up to two weeks.

**Q-- Where is FMD found?**

**A--** Foot-and-mouth disease has been found on all continents except North America, Australia and Antarctica. The U.S. has not had a case of foot-and-mouth disease since 1929 and that occurrence was contained and eradicated quickly. Canada was declared free of FMD in 1952 and the disease was eradicated in Mexico in 1954.

**Q-- What are the symptoms?**

**A--** The most obvious signs are excessive slobbering, going off feed and lameness. Affected animals may have a sudden rise in temperature, followed by blisters in the mouth and other tender areas such as udders, nostrils and on the feet near the hooves. Eating and movement becomes painful and many animals go off feed.

**Q-- How is it spread?**

**A--** FMD is highly contagious and can be spread by movement of infected animals, contaminated vehicles and by contaminated facilities used to hold animals. It also can infect animals through contaminated hay or feedstuffs and if susceptible animals drink from a common water source. Humans can spread it through clothing, footwear or other material. The virus can harbor in human nasal passages for as long as 28 hours and can be spread through the air.

**Q-- If FMD doesn't affect humans and rarely is fatal to animals, why all the concern?**

**A--** Because foot-and-mouth disease is highly contagious with nearly 100% of exposed animals ultimately becoming infected, it has significant economic impacts in any country where it crops up. If FMD were to occur in the U.S., the degree of economic impact would depend on how quickly the disease was identified and controlled.

**Q-- Is there a treatment or cure?**

**A--** The virus can be killed by heat, low humidity and some disinfectants. There is no cure and the virus usually runs its course in two to three weeks. The only effective eradication is to depopulate infected herds and burn the carcasses.