

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ABOUT THE
REVIEW OF FARM READINESS FOR EMERGENCY MILK MOVEMENT**

What is this?	1
Who should complete this review?.....	1
How am I supposed to help?.....	1
How will this information be used?	2
Will the answers that I give be kept confidential?	2
Why should I fill it out?	2
How tough is the survey to complete?	2
Do I have to cooperate?.....	3
Why bother?	3
Isn't FMD too unlikely to worry about?.....	3
Even if I get a permit to ship milk, who will accept it?	3
Won't operations like mine be doomed, regardless?	4

What is this?

This survey is intended to gather information about your farm, especially information about communication and biosecurity that will be necessary in an emergency, such as an outbreak of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD).

Who should complete this review?

We ask that you – the owner or manager of the dairy farm – answer as many questions as you can in the company of a state agricultural official or his/her designee. The official must be there to verify your answers and to respond to any questions or suggestions that you may have.

How am I supposed to help?

Within the next few months, a representative of *[State office of animal health]* will visit the farm and ask you, please, to update the information that we already have and to supply the rest. Our office will verify a record of your information only after a face-to-face meeting with you.

How will this information be used?

State and federal officials will use the information to better respond to a livestock emergency.

For example, in an outbreak of a highly contagious livestock disease, controls on traffic to and from farms may be required. Those controls can be more effective when they take into account the biosecurity of each operation – its ability to create and maintain barriers to infection.

In particular, if there is an outbreak that threatens dairy cattle, regulators plan to evaluate individual farm and plant biosecurity to determine if permits can be safely issued for milk movement. Preference will normally be given to premises that are designed and operated to minimize the risk of spreading disease during pickup and delivery. So, proper, verified protections at the farm gate will increase both opportunities for business continuity and consumer confidence in a crisis.

Will the answers that I give be kept confidential?

Yes. The information that you share will be maintained by the office of the State Veterinarian and kept confidential – available only to State agricultural officials and their designees in emergencies preparedness – unless and until the State Veterinarian declares a livestock emergency. In such an emergency, the information will be made available to other authorities who administer emergency control measures (such as a local, state, regional, or federal Emergency Operations Center).

Why should I fill it out?

The U.S. has been free of FMD – the most contagious of livestock diseases – for many years, but the risk may be increasing. If an outbreak does occur, livestock and animal products will only be allowed to move with appropriate precautions. Permits to move milk and other essentials of dairy business will depend on the documented quality of your preparations.

How tough is the survey to complete?

You probably know answers to all of the questions already, without any particular preparation. The first time you fill out the survey, it should take no more than about 20 minutes. Thereafter, updates (currently planned twice per year) should take only 10-15 minutes.

Since questions deal only with the potential biosecurity of traffic to and from the farm, there is no need for anyone to enter areas where livestock, feed, supplies, and equipment are kept.

Do I have to cooperate?

No. Completing the survey is your choice. There is no certain reward for agreeing to fill it out, and no certain penalty for declining.

But recognize that, by necessity in an emergency, State support may be greater for operations that provide this information in advance. It is just much harder to assist farms whose characteristics are unknown or unverified. It may also be useful for you to know which biosecurity measures are likely to increase eligibility for support of business continuity in an emergency.

Why bother? . . .

Isn't FMD too unlikely to worry about?

The U.S. has, in fact, been free of FMD for more than 80 years. Disease control measures, like those applied everyday by farmers, shippers, and border authorities such as USDA-APHIS deserve a good deal of credit. Nevertheless, in many respects the risk of an outbreak is increasing.

The disease has been and remains endemic in most of the world. The possibilities for a breach at the U.S. border are large and uncertain. FMD is just too radically contagious and pervasive to bet the farm that it will always remain somewhere else. In the past few years, it has spread to countries with similarly advanced animal public health care, to nations that were also for many years free of FMD and that are among the major trading partners of the U.S.

As global commerce and transportation intensify, the relevant question shifts from “if FMD strikes . . .” to “when it does, how will your operation survive?”

The virus may be brought to the U.S. through smuggled animal products, bio-terrorism, or a lapse in diligence or judgment among authorities or ordinary tourists. Whatever the means or likelihood, if an outbreak occurs anywhere in the region, the consequences will be too severe to ignore, especially if farmers, processors and haulers are unprepared to cope or if authorities lack information that they will need to help. This survey is part of an effort to increase the odds that your operation can survive, even if catastrophe strikes.

Even if I get a permit to ship milk, who will accept it?

Won't consumers quit buying when FMD is all over the front pages?

What's to stop a processor from refusing my milk, even if it's OK, to show consumers that their “brand” is beyond question?

No one can be entirely sure. In a FMD outbreak, the public may be hard to convince that milk is safe to drink. Some people and suppliers are sure to panic. Fact is, though, humans are not susceptible to FMD. Although the virus has been endemic in most of the world for centuries, there is not a single recorded case of a person getting FMD from consuming dairy products. Furthermore, pasteurization effectively destroys FMD virus just as it does other microbes that are truly harmful to people.

So, it's critical that we are all as prepared as possible to reduce panic, to see that dairy products deserve and maintain consumers' confidence.

Fortunately, preparations are well under way. Dairy producers, co-ops, processors, handlers, haulers, regulators and commodity groups have allied to assemble a vast array of powerful instruments for preserving dairy markets, including press releases, websites and social media campaigns that are ready-to-launch if FMD breaks. These efforts have been well-supported by basically every major dairy organization, including DMI (Dairy Management Inc.) IDFA (International Dairy Foods Association), and MilkPEP (Milk Processor Education Program) as well as USDA, departments of agriculture in every New England state, and some of the largest national dairy processing and marketing companies. That alliance (forged in anticipation of FMD, and tested in exercises across the country) recently proved its value during the nuclear-power-plant disaster in Japan. During that time, these partners successfully worked together to assure that neither public health nor dairy sales suffered in the U.S. No one was "thrown under the bus."

So, there is evidence that preparation can help producers, processors, and consumers handle food-safety concerns. If FMD breaks in the U.S., everyone is apt to be aboard the same bus. Uncertainty and losses may be inevitable, but there is good reason to believe that preparations for FMD are already yielding rewards that include better chances of sustaining your dairy operation in an emergency.

Won't operations like mine be doomed, regardless?

You're right to be concerned. There are many reasons that even well-prepared operations could be disrupted. The rapid and often unpredictable way that FMD spreads is among the reasons that an outbreak – even a single, confirmed case of the disease – is apt to prompt the declaration of a local, state or even national "emergency." The disease is bound to be damaging, but its effect on your particular operation can't be predicted for sure. It may never recover or remain untouched, depending on lots of factors, only some of which – and there are some! – can be controlled.

If cattle or other susceptible livestock on your farm show signs of FMD, you're bound to be quarantined. Even if your livestock remain healthy, traffic to and from your farm (including milk pickup) may be restricted simply because you're too near or otherwise connected to farms that are infected. Furthermore, in an emergency, the interests of other food sectors (e.g., pork, beef, or even grain) may require restrictions in agriculture as a whole, even if they are tough on dairies. Pressure from partners or rivals in international trade may prevail over local interests, including yours.

State and national authorities are working to identify and reduce just such risks. This survey is part of that effort. But no one can guarantee the continuity of your operation in an emergency, no matter what you do now. For sure, though, preparation can make your business survival more likely. In particular, by helping document your readiness to resist the spread of FMD, you are increasing the chances that you will qualify for permission to move milk in an outbreak.

COOPERATION AS WELL AS
COMMENTS, QUESTIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS
ARE VERY MUCH APPRECIATED.

For more information, contact State Veterinarian *[name]*
by email *[email address]* or call *[phone number]*