

# Considerations for Enhanced Biosecurity for Cattle Grazing on Public Land Allotments



This document supplements material presented in the *SBS Self-Assessment Checklist and Information Manual for Enhanced Biosecurity for Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) Prevention: Cattle on Pasture* available at: <https://securebeef.org/beef-producers/biosecurity/>. The guidance in those documents primarily focuses on cattle grazing **private** pasture and rangelands. There are unique factors regarding **public land<sup>1</sup> grazing** which pose serious FMD virus exposure threats to some of the cattle herds in the United States.

## Introduction

Enhanced biosecurity aims to protect animals from FMD virus exposure risks. Approximately 40% of beef cows in the western U.S. graze on public lands for part of the year.<sup>2</sup> Generally, public lands are very remote with limited access and sparsely distributed livestock across the landscape. These animals may be at a decreased FMD virus exposure risk when compared with areas of high livestock density. However, in an FMD outbreak, public land grazers need to be aware of the exposure risks and implement strict, enhanced biosecurity procedures wherever possible to protect the herd.

In some instances, FMD virus in other countries was spread by infected yet undetected sheep grazing near other livestock, as well as contaminated vehicles and people movement in livestock grazing areas. The considerations described herein pertain to an FMD outbreak where the public lands are located in a regulatory Control Area and there is an infected sheep flock, cattle herd, or wildlife within the same geographic area, thus posing a risk of FMD virus exposure.

All flocks/herds permitted to graze public lands are subject to regulatory movement controls. During an FMD outbreak, the State Animal Health Official will work together with USDA, federal and state agencies that have the authority to regulate access and use of public lands.

## Exposure Risks on Public Lands

FMD virus exposure risks on public lands in a regulatory Control Area include:

- Common-use roads: Many public lands are located in remote regions with limited access via few maintained roads. A single transport carrier that has recently transported an FMD-infected animal could contaminate the roadway, potentially exposing other transport vehicles and the livestock they carry.
  - Livestock grazers may be required to use the same road system when transporting livestock to and from public land grazing allotments.
  - Public land recreationalists may use the same road for activities, including transport of animals for recreational use (e.g., horses, pack goats/camelids).
- Common-use corrals/trailheads: Multiple grazing allotments used by different producers commonly share the unloading/loading areas to access their permitted allotment. These corrals may also be used by recreationalists with animals (e.g., horses, pack goats/camelids). A single animal infected with FMD virus moved through the corral could expose other susceptible livestock to FMD virus.

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<sup>1</sup> Similar disease challenges may exist for cattle grazing other lands such as reservations and energy leases (owned by an energy company for minerals but lease the land for livestock grazing). For simplicity, this document will use the term “public lands” to encompass the risks described herein.

<sup>2</sup> Public Lands Council, Public Lands Grazing, available at: <https://www.ncba.org/CMDocs/BeefUSA/Issues/PublicLandsRanchingOverview.pdf>

- Common-use trail system: The U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and most state land systems allow producers to use livestock trail venues to herd animals to and from public land allotments. It is common for multiple producers to use the same trail in a grazing season. A single animal infected with FMD virus on the trail could expose other susceptible livestock to FMD virus.
- Other infected cattle herds/sheep flocks: Some producers form grazing associations and graze livestock (sheep, cattle, or both) on the same public land allotment at the same time either as separate or commingled groups. The risk of exposure increases for other herds/flocks in the association if one herd/flock is FMD infected.
- Wildlife interactions: Mingling with wildlife infected with FMD virus or serving as a vector (e.g., carrying the virus on their hooves/feet) increases the risk of exposure for livestock grazing on public lands.

## Protecting Your Herd

Creating an effective Line of Separation (LOS) for livestock grazing vast open rangelands is not realistic. Instead, focus efforts on thorough planning and coordination with state and federal land and wildlife management agencies. Public land grazing permittees should proactively work with their State Animal Health Officials and livestock associations to develop proposals for livestock separation and movement strategies on public land allotments in the event of an FMD outbreak. Proposals should then be presented to the state/federal agency managing the grazing permit. While grazing public land allotments, the following steps can help protect the herd:

- Attempt to maximize distance between your herd and other grazing herds or flocks whenever possible.
- Avoid commingling horses, dogs, etc. working on public lands with other herds/flocks or used on other premises.
- Avoid common use corrals, trailheads, and trail systems whenever possible.
- Limit who has contact with the herd; those handling cattle should not have contact with other livestock, including moving between groups on separate allotments or on other premises, unless they have changed into clean clothes and footwear prior to minimize exposure.
- Report dead livestock and FMD susceptible wildlife to the regulatory officials managing the outbreak so they can work with the agency that issued the grazing permit to determine appropriate disposal options.
- Record and report wildlife interactions to regulatory officials managing the outbreak, the agency managing the grazing permit, and state/federal wildlife management agencies to determine control options.
- Clean and disinfect trucks, trailers, and equipment before entering other lands or transporting other livestock.
- Quarantine animals that grazed public lands for a time period defined by animal health officials before commingling them with other animals.