



## Preparedness and Response to Emerging Veterinary Disease Outbreaks

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### What is happening outside the European Union?

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The European Commission for the Control of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (EuFMD) was established under the auspices of the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) in 1954 to promote national and international action for the prevention and control of FMD. Today EuFMD has 39 member nations, including the EU27 and its mandate has been extended to include FMD and similar transboundary animal diseases (FAST diseases<sup>1</sup>). Thirty-six members are FMD-free without vaccination whereas FMD is endemic in Türkiye, Israel and Georgia and these countries use vaccination on a routine basis to control the spread of the disease. Broadly speaking, the activities of EuFMD are aimed at ensuring the preparedness of member nations and reducing risk in neighbouring regions. Therefore, EuFMD works closely with non-member countries in North Africa, the Near East, and “the South-East European Neighbourhood (SEEN)” in capacity development, surveillance and risk information sharing.

EuFMD supports reference laboratories in undertaking virus surveillance in the European neighbourhood and in recent years, this has resulted in the identification of several new FMD viruses. Phylogenetic analyses have shown that these new viral introductions reflect long-distance transmission from other regions, including South Asia, East Africa and West Africa. Of particular note amongst these introductions were two SAT-2 type viruses – a SAT2 topotype XIV virus that was introduced from East Africa into the near East in 2022 eventually spreading through Anatolia (Türkiye) in 2023 and a SAT2 topotype V virus introduced from West Africa into Algeria in late 2023.

In 2020, EuFMD was tasked by its member nations with addressing different aspects of vaccine security for member nations. A multi-stakeholder platform was convened to provide a forum where vaccine bank managers, vaccine manufacturers, regulators, and policy- and decision-makers could discuss challenges and potential solutions. A paper was published highlighting the implications of the Nagoya Protocol for the timely availability of vaccines against new and emerging FMD strains. User-friendly tools were developed in collaboration with The Pirbright Institute - to assess the supply and demand of vaccines (VADEMOS); to assist vaccine bank managers in selecting the most appropriate antigens (PRAGMATIST) and to make all of the data held by the global network of FMD reference laboratories readily available (Open FMD).



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In addition, EuFMD developed a system for the prequalification of vaccines (PQv) following the same principles as those used by the World Health Organisation in the prequalification scheme they operate for human vaccines but adapted for the different infrastructure, legislation and resources available in the veterinary domain. The “proof of concept” phase of this project has been completed with the publication on the EuFMD webpages of a list of prequalified vaccines . The listed vaccines have been shown to comply with minimum international standards as defined in the WOAH Terrestrial Manual based on independent expert evaluation of data provided by the manufacturers. This represents the first time that a system has been used to independently assure the quality of veterinary vaccines and to make the outcome publicly available. PQv is not a regulatory procedure but it can help national authorities as the public summary report may be useful in reaching a national decision on authorisation. Further developing the PQv concept and extending its scope to cover other transboundary animal diseases has the potential to provide the EU with a valuable source of information when preparing and responding to diseases for which effective and high-quality vaccines already exist in other regions of the world.

<sup>1</sup> FAST diseases = Lumpy Skin Disease, Sheep Pox and Goat Pox, Rift Valley Fever, Peste de Petits Ruminants

<sup>1</sup> FAO website: The PQv list. <https://www.fao.org/eufmd/global-situation/vaccine-prequalification/pgvlist/en/> (accessed 13/03/25)