

New foot-and-mouth disease strain spreads from N. Africa: UN

May 2 2012

A new strain of foot-and-mouth disease has been detected in the Gaza Strip, the UN food agency announced on Wednesday, saying this confirmed fears of a spread following outbreaks in Egypt and Libya.

The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in Rome said an outbreak of the SAT2 strain had been found in Rafah in the southern part of Gaza Strip on the border with Egypt and it was sending 20,000 vaccine doses immediately.

"If FMD SAT2 reaches deeper into the Middle East it could spread throughout vast areas, threatening the Gulf countries -- even southern and eastern Europe, and perhaps beyond," said Juan Lubroth, FAO's chief veterinary officer.

Lubroth said that vaccines against the SAT2 virus were in short supply and that the immediate priority should be to limit the movement of animals to prevent the highly infectious disease from spreading further.

The FAO said movement of animals from the [Nile Delta](#) through the Sinai Peninsula into the Gaza Strip were considered high risk. Foot-and-mouth spreads through the saliva of sick animals and can be passed on by traders at markets.

The agency said it would send an extra 40,000 [vaccine doses](#) to Gaza as soon as possible and was negotiating with producers "in the event of further spread of foot-and-mouth disease and a worsening of the current

disease."

It said Israel had already implemented a targeted vaccination programme.

FMD affects cows, sheep and goats and has a major negative impact on meat and milk production. It does not pose a direct risk to human health but can cause higher rates of mortality among pregnant and young animals.

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Citation: New foot-and-mouth disease strain spreads from N. Africa: UN (2012, May 2)
retrieved 6 May 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-05-foot-and-mouth-disease-strain-africa.html>

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