

Paraguay confirms new foot-and-mouth outbreak

3 January 2012

Major beef exporter Paraguay confirmed a new outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease Tuesday in the north of the country, four days after lifting a state of emergency imposed in the region in September.

Daniel Rojas, head of the government's animal health service, said a "positive test result" of the highly contagious [disease](#) for cattle had been reported to the World Organisation for Animal Health.

The authorities on Tuesday ordered the slaughter of about 150 cattle belonging to a rancher near San Pedro, some 400 kilometers (250 miles) north of Asuncion.

The new outbreak was about 30 kilometers from an outbreak reported in September, which led to the slaughter of some 1,000 animals.

Paraguay, one of the 10 largest beef exporters in the world, suspended exports in September and had been preparing to resume sales to Russia, Brazil and Venezuela.

As a result of last year's outbreak, Paraguay's beef exports for 2011 fell to \$700 million, from about \$900 million the previous year.

One of the most contagious animal diseases known to scientists, foot-and-mouth (also known as hoof-and-mouth) disease infects mainly cattle and swine but also sheep and goats.

The disease can be spread by dust, animal-to-animal contact in [herds](#), through consumption of contaminated animal products and even by farm implements and vehicles.

Although adult animals normally do not die from the disease, they must be destroyed once infected to keep it from spreading.

The government paid compensation last year to

owners of the animals but this time will not, officials said.

Nestor Nunez, president of the Rural Association of Paraguay, criticized this as "punishment by example" for the cattle owner.

Officials said last year that a botched vaccine intended to protect Paraguay's livestock against [foot-and-mouth disease](#) was responsible for transmitting the ailment to hundreds of animals.

The [outbreak](#) prompted neighboring countries to ban the import of Paraguayan meat, livestock, and meat by-products to prevent the spread of the disease across international boundaries.

The agriculture ministers from six South American countries agreed in November to make the eradication of foot-and-mouth disease a regional priority.

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