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## **Austria**

### **Livestock and Products**

# **Austrian Measures to Prevent Foot and Mouth Disease 2001**

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#### **Report Highlights:**

**To prevent foot and mouth disease spreading into Austria, Austria has implemented a number of measures, including some that surpass those of the EU. In case this disease occurs in Austria, a crisis plan will be activated.**

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Includes PSD changes: No  
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## Austrian Measures to Prevent Foot and Mouth Disease

### Summary

Austria's last FMD epidemic was in 1973. Due to the outbreak of foot and mouth disease in some EU countries, Austria implemented precautionary measures to prevent it spreading into Austria. Measures include: an import ban on cloven hoofed animals, and their products, coming from foot and mouth disease affected EU countries. In addition, no permissions for shipments of live cloven hoofed animals from non-affected EU countries have been issued as of March 26, 2001. This latter measure is not in conformance with EU regulations. In response to the BSE crisis Austria also took stricter measures than the EU. End summary.

### 1973: Last Foot and Mouth Disease Outbreak in Austria

The last time foot and mouth disease (FMD) occurred in 1973. It began in January and ended in July. However, sporadic outbreaks were noticed until October 1973. The disease affected the federal provinces of Lower Austria, Burgenland, and Vienna, where a combined number of more than 80,000 animals (4,500 cattle, 75,600 hogs, and a small number of sheep and goats) were culled. The damage ran up to AS 150 million (about U.S.\$ 10 million) but farmers were compensated for their losses.

### Measures to Prevent FMD

The FMD outbreak in some EU countries is of great concern to Austrian veterinary authorities. They are trying hard to keep the country FMD-free. This is witnessed by nine new regulations published to date and their strict implementation. At present, the following regulative restrictions have been implemented.

1. Imports and transshipments of farm and wild live cloven hoofed animals and their products, originating or coming from Great Britain, Ireland, Netherlands, and France, are banned. While the EU at first had banned imports only from certain areas of France, Austria included the entire country. For this reason, Austria was sharply criticized by EU Commissioner David Byrne, who demanded that Austria comply with EU regulations. Later on, the EU followed Austria's lead in these restrictions.
2. According to EU regulation, under the current circumstances, shipments of live cloven hoofed animals from other EU countries must be "pre-announced" to the administrative agency of the target area. This is similar to an import approval. To reduce infection risks, the veterinary authority instructed all provincial governors on March 26 to prohibit deliveries from any EU country.
3. In addition, transports of domestic cloven hoofed animals within the country are forbidden. Only direct transportation to slaughter houses for quick slaughter, or to an other farm, or direct exports from a farm to a third country are permitted. The transport restriction eliminates open livestock markets and

thus reduces the danger of infection.

4. All transport vehicles must be cleaned and disinfected after use. Disinfection must be documented.
5. Transport from only one farm to a slaughter house are expensive as the generally small Austrian farms deliver only a few animals at a time. Farmer representatives demanded that collective transport be permitted under certain conditions. Since March 28, transport of Austrian slaughter animals from farms to a collection point are allowed. In addition, trucks can go to various farms to pick up slaughter animals, if there is no contact with animals remaining on the farms. The collective transport requires permission.
6. According to EU regulation, imports from third countries cannot be banned. However, veterinary officers carry out strict inspections at border stations. (Austria has 18 veterinary stations at its non-EU borders.)
7. FMD is also of great concern to Austrian zoos. Certain parts of the zoos, such as the petting zoo (human contact with animals) and pens with particularly sensitive animals have been closed. In addition, no animal transport is permitted; sick animals are treated in the zoos. Caretakers disinfect themselves several times per day and work clothing remains on site. At all entrances visitors must walk over special carpets to disinfect their shoes.
8. At airports, at the gates where planes from FMD countries arrive, passengers must walk over carpets soaked with citric acid. In planes and international trains, people are informed about precautions against FMD including the requirement to destroy livestock products brought from these countries.

### Crisis Plan

If there is a suspected or actual case of FMD in Austria, it will be handled according to an established crisis plan. The epidemics commission (district veterinarian officer, mayor, agricultural representatives, etc.) meets under the supervision of the district veterinarian officer and reports the case to the local animal epidemics control center (provincial veterinary service) and the national animal epidemics control center (veterinary service at the Ministry for Social Security and Generations; chief veterinary officer Prof. Dr. Peter Weber). The latter informs the public about all suspected or actual epidemic cases.

The crisis plan includes provision of man power and equipment for required measures. For instance it is stated that the decontamination group of the army must assist if necessary. The reference laboratory is the Federal Institute for Veterinary Medical Testing in Modling, Lower Austria.

Actions to be undertaken are indicated in a diagram of the crisis plan. The farmer or a veterinarian reports the suspected epidemic case to the district administration. The official district veterinarian investigates and quarantines the farm preliminarily. The preliminary quarantine ends when the test results of the national reference laboratory are available. If these results are negative, the preliminary quarantine is lifted. If the epidemic is confirmed, the disease is reported to the local epidemic control center and the district administration definitively quarantines the farm.

In the next step, the epidemics commission evaluates the value of the animals and then orders the culling of them. Carcasses must be properly eliminated, which under "normal" conditions takes place in rendering plants. After a preliminary disinfection, the final disinfection is carried out under supervision of an official veterinarian. Finally, the farm is inspected and the quarantine lifted.

Austria has a crisis plan for all animal epidemics. Basically it is equal but differs in details, e.g. the size of the zones. In case of FMD quarantine, the closed zone around the farm is at least 3 km and the surveillance zone at least 10 km in diameter. However, the zones can be expanded as needed.

The veterinary service carries out regular epidemics drills and exercises in which the appropriate army units participate.