UNITED STATES ANIMAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION

2026 Resolution

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RESOLUTION NUMBER: 18 APPROVED

SOURCE: COMMITTEE ON ANIMAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

SUBJECT MATTER: Approval of Cow's Milk as a Sample Type for Foot and Mouth Disease Testing with Use Case and Corresponding Response Actions in an Outbreak

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association urges the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS), to:

1. Develop, validate, approve, and maintain the capability to test cow milk samples using real-time reverse transcriptase polymerase chain reaction testing for official foot and mouth disease surveillance during an outbreak; and

2. Define the intended uses, limitations, testing strategies, result interpretation, confirmatory testing requirements, and regulatory response actions associated with presumptive-positive (also referred to as non-negative) and not-detected milk test results from USDA-APHIS-VS National Animal Health Laboratory Network laboratories, recognizing that a non-negative bulk milk test result, by itself, does not confirm an infected premises.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) is a highly contagious disease of cloven-hoofed livestock. Although it is not a food safety or public health risk, an outbreak would have severe animal health, economic, movement, and trade consequences for United States livestock industries.

FMD virus can be present in milk before clinical signs are observed. Real-time reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (rRT-PCR) testing of bulk milk can provide a practical, noninvasive, herd-level surveillance tool for early detection and outbreak management in dairy cattle. Bulk milk testing is intended to complement, not replace, clinical surveillance and other diagnostic testing.

The National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF) white paper, *Using Bulk Milk Testing as a Foot and Mouth Disease Outbreak Response Tool*, funded through a cooperative agreement (AP24VSSP0000C119) with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), National Animal Disease Preparedness and

Response Program, identifies operational needs for using milk surveillance during an FMD response. The NMPF white paper identifies the following key gaps:

- Cow's milk is not currently an approved sample type for FMD rRT-PCR testing, despite validation of the test for other diagnostic sample types. Pre-outbreak performance data would strengthen preparedness, support rapid implementation, and inform future USDA use of bulk milk testing.
- A clear national policy for FMD milk surveillance does not exist. Such a policy is needed to define intended uses, limitations, testing strategies, interpretation of results, confirmatory testing requirements, and regulatory response actions associated with USDA-APHIS, Veterinary Services, National Animal Health Laboratory Network milk test results. The policy should also explicitly distinguish between presumptive-positive (also referred to as non-negative) and not-detected results; clarify that a presumptive-positive bulk milk result alone does not confirm an infected premises; and ensure that such results trigger appropriate investigation and confirmatory testing.

Experience with highly pathogenic avian influenza H5N1 milk testing demonstrated opportunities to improve sample access, identification, transport, data management, laboratory accessioning, surge capacity, and communication of test results to facilitate a rapid, efficient response and limit disease spread. These systems should be developed, funded, and exercised before an FMD outbreak occurs.

The NMPF white paper proposes an Animal Health Surveillance Milk sample to represent saleable milk from lactating cows on a dairy premises and recommends advance planning for surveillance in FMD Control Areas and Surveillance Zones. It also recommends memoranda of agreement, or equivalent arrangements, between state animal health and dairy regulatory agencies so that existing milk samples can be rapidly accessed for official testing without jurisdictional delays.

REFERENCE: National Milk Producers Federation. *Using Bulk Milk Testing as a Foot and Mouth Disease Outbreak Response Tool*. 2026. Created, in part, through cooperative agreement AP24VSSP0000C119 with the USDA-APHIS National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program. The contents may not necessarily represent the views of USDA-APHIS.