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Foot-and-mouth disease detected in Indonesia; Australian livestock sector on alert

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3-4 minutes

Australian biosecurity officials are on high alert after reports of more than 1,000 cases of foot-and-mouth disease in Indonesia, with fears that a large multi-state outbreak here could cost the industry billions of dollars.

Key points:

- The Cattle Council says more than 1,200 cases have been confirmed in Indonesia
- Australia has offered assistance as Indonesia prepares an emergency declaration
- A large, 12-month outbreak of FMD in Australia could cost the industry \$16 billion

The Cattle Council of Australia on Friday said it had received advice that 1,247 cases of the contagious disease had been detected in four East Java provinces — Gresik, Lamongan, Sidoarjo and Mojokerto.

In a statement to members, the council said it understood Indonesia was in the process of preparing an emergency declaration and collecting samples to determine an appropriate vaccine.

"We are engaged with Indonesia and also working across our networks to establish the support that Australia and other global and regional organisations can offer to support a swift and effective response," the council's statement said.

"Indonesia is our closest neighbour with whom we share an incredibly important bilateral trading partnership. The close proximity of Indonesia has major implications for our biosecurity system and disease-free status."

The Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (DAWE) confirmed it was aware of reports of an outbreak and said Australia would offer immediate assistance.

Foot-and-mouth disease is considered one of the most serious livestock diseases, affecting cloven-hoofed animals such as cattle, buffalo, camels, sheep, goats, deer and pigs.

It can kill young animals, cause production losses and lead to significant trade restrictions.

Animals can be infected with the viral disease through inhalation, ingestion and direct contact.

The Indonesian FMD outbreak reports come at a time when Australia's biosecurity officials are putting significant resources into [lumpy skin disease](#), which has also been detected in Indonesia.

Costs thought to be as much as \$100bn

Cattle Council chief executive John McGoverne said we would expect losses to be significantly higher than the last official estimates, given the enormous rises in livestock prices.

Agricultural Commodity forecaster [ABARES published research in 2013](#) that said a large multi-state FMD outbreak would see estimates of revenue losses of between \$49.3 billion and \$51.8 billion over 10 years.

The ABARES report noted that as well as the financial loss, social impacts like mental health issues and reduced welfare may result in communities reliant on cattle production.

The report explains "the severity of these impacts will be influenced not only by the size of the outbreak and time out of export markets, but also the vulnerability of a community and its ability to recover".

Mr McGoverne pointed out that cattle prices were significantly higher than they were nine years ago and the increase in the benchmark price the Eastern Young Cattle Indicator (EYCI), which has more than doubled in that time, would be reflected in industry losses.

Foot-and-mouth disease caused more than \$19 billion in losses during an outbreak in the United Kingdom in 2001.

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