

FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE - WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE INVOLVED IN A ROAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENT IN WHICH A DEER IS INJURED OR KILLED – BIOSECURITY ADVICE FOR THE PUBLIC

Introduction

The foot and mouth disease virus infects a wide range of animals that live in the British countryside, including cattle, sheep, goats, pigs and deer. Horses are not affected by the virus, but like people, dogs and vehicles, they can act as mechanical carriers of the virus. Foot and Mouth Disease has recently been present in two areas of Surrey in southern England; these areas are home to a significant population wild deer and it is remotely possible that deer might be infected with the disease.

In recent outbreaks in Europe there has been no evidence that deer have played any part in the spread or persistence of the Foot and Mouth Disease and strict biosecurity measures aimed only at domestic animals have succeeded in eradicating the disease. Despite this re-assurance, it is still possible that wild deer in Surrey could be infected and it is also likely that deer will be involved in road accidents in the affected areas.

The Foot and Mouth Disease virus

The infectious agent of Foot and Mouth Disease is an “Aphthovirus” which is highly resistant to normal environmental conditions and to desiccation. This means that the virus can persist in mud, faeces, dirty water and on clothing, vehicles and other objects for significant lengths of time even when the surface is dry. It is not universally susceptible to ordinary disinfectants. Within a susceptible animal, the virus spreads to a wide range of sites and may be present in the mouth, gut, throat, blood, faeces, urine, udder and milk of the creature.

Road traffic accidents involving deer within the current Protection and Surveillance Zones

If members of the public are involved in road traffic accidents with deer within the Protection and Surveillance Zones the following measures will reduce the risk of infection being spread:

Dealing with the deer

- If the deer is mobile and moves away from the scene of the accident, LEAVE IT ALONE. DO NOT ATTEMPT TO FOLLOW IT.
- Call the police and report the accident. The police and Local Authority will be responsible for removing the deer if necessary.
- If you have a dog or passengers in the vehicle, do not allow them out of the vehicle unless they are at risk because of the state of the vehicle. If they leave the vehicle, keep them well away from the deer.
- If the deer is killed and is not obstructing the road, DO NOT TOUCH IT.
- If the deer is killed and is obstructing the road, having assured your own safety, drag it to the side of the road using an antler if it is a male, or by one leg if it is a female or a juvenile. Grab the leg part-way up and avoid holding the hoof.. Try to avoid stepping in any blood or fluid leaking from the deer. Once you have moved the deer, leave it alone.

- If the deer is alive but immobile and obstructing the road, LEAVE IT ALONE until the Police arrive. Provided you can do so safely you might consider taking steps to prevent other road users from colliding with the deer by careful placement of your own vehicle or the use of warning signs.

Dealing with your vehicle and clothing

- The vehicle that collided with the deer may be contaminated. Do not take the vehicle from the scene of the accident to a farm or other agricultural holding where livestock are present. The same applies to any vehicle that drove through blood, fluid or faeces from the deer.
- Do not wipe or smear any blood, fluid or tissue that may be present on the vehicle.
- At the earliest possible opportunity wash the car thoroughly using a pressure washer or commercial car wash. Concentrate on the wheels, wheel arches, and areas where the impact occurred. Make certain that all mud and organic debris is washed away. Do not wash the car on a farm or adjacent to fields where livestock are present.
- If the vehicle is likely to have any reason to visit premises where livestock is kept within the foreseeable future, spray the underside, wheels and wheel arches with an approved disinfectant.
- If the vehicle can not be driven, instruct the commercial vehicle recovery operator to pressure wash the vehicle at the recovery yard.
- If the deer was handled in any way, at the earliest opportunity thoroughly wash hands and arms, concentrating on cleaning under fingernails and between fingers. If you used disposable gloves, or protected your hands with a rag, newspaper etc make sure that it is disposed of by burning or placing in the general rubbish (not recycling)
- Change all outer clothes as soon as possible and certainly before visiting any premises where livestock may be present. Washable clothes should be washed on the highest temperature appropriate to the fabric. Waterproofs must be rinsed clean and disinfected.
- Shoes and boots must be washed completely clean of all mud and debris and then sponged with approved disinfectant solution and allowed to dry before applying any polish or dressing.
- Approved disinfectants are available from most farmers/countryside suppliers

DEFRA sampling policy

Within the current Protection Zones DEFRA is hoping to take samples from deer involved in road accidents. Police and Local Authority officers will contact the local Animal Health Office of DEFRA.