

Foot-and-mouth disease

lesions cause salivation, slobbering or frothiness. Mouth lesions usually heal rapidly, but secondary infections often arise in the feet. The use of so many antibiotics in the present day often becloud the clinical manifestation of the disease and make it much more difficult to detect. Mortality is not usually over five per cent, but perhaps will run up to eight per cent in young animals. In the malignant form, if it is accompanied by heart lesions, the mortality may go up as high as fifty per cent.

The infective agent in foot-and-mouth disease is a filterable virus which cannot be seen with powerful microscopes, and passes through filters which hold back the smallest bacteria. The virus is present in the fluid and coverings of vesicles, and also in the blood in the initial febrile or feverish stage of the disease. Saliva, milk, urine and other secretions may also contain the virus. The fluid and coverings of the vesicles in the animal usually lose their infectivity within from four to six days after the lesions appear, but the great danger is that this material from the body could remain alive many months, depending upon the temperature. After it has dropped off the body on to the ground, it may remain alive many months depending upon the temperature. For instance, at body temperature it may remain alive 24 to 48 hours; at room temperature, probably 8 to 10 weeks; and under refrigeration or freezing temperatures, it could remain active for years. As a matter of fact, that is the way it is kept for experimental purposes. As I said before, you will realize how dangerous it could become in climatic conditions such as we have if it were allowed to spread to our wild animals.

Some investigators believe that some animals may be carriers, as I mentioned before, and that such animals may harbour the virus for a long time after recovery. The number of such carriers, however, is believed to be small but there is strong evidence to support the theory and cases have been known to develop even after a year. Milk, meat and raw by-products of the slaughter of infected animals may be instrumental in distributing the virus. In view of recent statements regarding the provincial embargo, I think it is only fair to point out that bone marrow may retain virus after being kept at chilling temperatures or treated by the dry or wet salt process for up to 42 days, and if kept at freezing temperatures, for up to 76 days. Regardless of what has been said in the press that there is no danger at all—

Mr. Gardiner: No danger in eating the meat.

[Mr. Charlton.]

Mr. Charlton: I did not say anything about eating the meat. The danger is in spreading the disease by shipping meat from one province to the other.

Mr. Gardiner: In so far as I am concerned there has been no statement made other than that eating the meat will not give anyone the disease.

Mr. Charlton: That is quite debatable, too. Some textbooks say humans are resistant to it, some even going so far as to say it is impossible for humans to contract the disease. Other textbooks say that they may. I am not going to enter into that argument. I shall leave it for the medical profession. It does not alter the fact, however, that in many cases bone marrow that has been taken from beef frozen for 76 days has infected cattle with the disease, so it naturally must have retained its infectivity for that long.

As I said before, the disease can be carried for considerable distance. Have any cattle infected with the disease been killed in Saskatchewan? Were any disease conditions ever reported by abattoirs in the Regina area? Was there any of this diseased meat shipped to the west or the south? We do not know. I believe the minister should have the answers to those questions. Probably he can answer them at a later date, but it is important to trace that meat, wherever it might have gone, if it happened to be from diseased animals.

Unfortunately there is no practical vaccination or cure for the disease which spreads like wildfire and must be fought quickly and effectively lest it become a conflagration. Every livestock producer should know the facts about foot-and-mouth disease. According to the reports that we have, and according to what I have been told, it is quite apparent that some of the farmers knew more than some of the veterinarians. We understand that many farmers suggested to the veterinarians that this was foot-and-mouth disease. The farmers were fearful of it, but apparently some of the veterinarians stuck to the idea that it was merely vesicular stomatitis. Tests were not conducted to prove it, and therefore the farmer said: These veterinarians know more than we do about it, and let it go at that.

It is very important, Mr. Chairman, that every livestock producer should know the facts about foot-and-mouth disease. I therefore suggest that the government should advertise in some suitable way the symptoms and clinical manifestations of the disease, so that farmers would immediately report any suspicious cases in the shortest possible time. I may also point out that there are