



Foot-and-mouth disease: the Army sanitizes trucks at the border with Slovenia

Published on 15/04/2025

The Italian Army is actively engaged in containing the spread of **foot-and-mouth disease**, a dangerous and highly contagious viral disease that has affected ungulates in various areas of Eastern Europe. Following the identification of recent **outbreaks in Hungary and Slovakia**, Italian authorities have activated a series of extraordinary measures to **prevent the virus from entering the national territory**.

Under the directive of the **Ministry of Defense**, the **Army's disinfection units**, coordinated by the **Comando Forze Operative Nord in Padua**, have been operational for two days at the **international border crossings with Slovenia**, particularly at **Sant'Andrea (Gorizia)** and **Ferneti (Monrupino)**. Here, **sanitization and control operations on trucks transporting sheep and pigs** entering Italy are being carried out.

Continuous presence at the crossings

The activities are conducted **24 hours a day**, with a constant presence of military personnel, who operate using **specialized vehicles and dedicated equipment**. The interventions are part of a plan defined according to the **protocols of the Ministry of Health**, in collaboration with **health and veterinary authorities**, as well as customs services.

The primary objective is to **interrupt any possibility of virus transmission** through animal transport, considered one of the main vectors. Each vehicle is **identified, checked, and sanitized** before entering the national territory.

A concrete threat to Italy

The activation of extraordinary measures is part of an increasingly critical European context. **After a first outbreak confirmed in Germany last January**, Hungary also reported new cases of foot-and-mouth disease in March. In particular, the **IZS Lombardia and Emilia Romagna** announced an outbreak identified near **Győr**, close to the Slovak border, in a **dairy cow farm**. The infected cattle show typical symptoms of the disease, and the presence of the virus has been confirmed by local laboratories.

Already in January, the **World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH)** and the **Friedrich-Loeffler-Institut (FLI)** reported an outbreak in a buffalo farm in the **Land of Brandenburg**, the first case in Germany since 1988 and the first in Europe since 2011 (the year the last outbreak was recorded in Bulgaria).

Foot-and-mouth disease affects **cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, and other ungulates**, both domestic and wild, causing **painful vesicles in the oral cavity, on the feet, and on the udder**, with severe damage to animal health and significant economic and productive repercussions. Although it does not pose a direct threat to humans, its **high contagiousness** requires **strict containment measures**.

The role of the Army in a delicate European context

The Army's intervention is part of a broader strategy of **biosecurity and prevention**, implemented in synergy with border veterinary services, civil protection, and health institutions. The controls at the crossings represent the first line of defense to **prevent the virus from**

entering the Italian agri-food chain, protecting a sector already severely tested by other health emergencies and market instabilities.

The rapid activation of the disinfection units by the **Comando Forze Operative Nord** demonstrates the **operational readiness of the Armed Forces**, capable of intervening in complex scenarios even outside the strictly military sphere.

A situation to be closely monitored

With eleven confirmed outbreaks in Europe within a few months – one in Germany, four in Hungary, and six in Slovenia – the situation requires intense **monitoring** and close **international collaboration** among the health authorities of the European Union countries. Italy, due to its **strategic geographical position** and the **significant volume of livestock trade**, has already activated **enhanced controls** to prevent the virus from entering its territory.

The **livestock sector**, considered particularly exposed, would risk **serious consequences** in the event of **further spread of the virus**, with **significant impacts on production, exports**, and the entire **balance of the agricultural economy at the European level**.

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