

ICAR-NIFMD Observes FMD Awareness Month 2026 with the theme “Foot and Mouth Disease Diagnosis: Back to the Basics”

The ICAR–National Institute on Foot and Mouth Disease (ICAR-NIFMD), Bhubaneswar, is observing FMD Awareness Month during September–October 2026 with a series of awareness and capacity-building activities to strengthen FMD surveillance and diagnosis in the country. It is being observed for the fourth consecutive year to commemorate the nationwide launch of the National Animal Disease Control Programme (NADCP) for FMD and Brucellosis, by the Hon’ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, on 11 September 2019. As part of the program, ICAR-NIFMD organized two-day online scientific lectures on 18 and 21 September 2026 on the theme “*Foot and Mouth Disease Diagnosis: Back to the Basics.*” The program brought officials from the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying (DAHD), PIs/Co-PIs of FMD network laboratories, and scientists from ICAR-NIFMD together.

The programme was conceived in view of the changing epidemiological scenario of FMD in the country. With increasing vaccination coverage and a progressive reduction in the incidence and severity of clinical disease, the requirements of FMD surveillance are also evolving. In this context, collection of the right sample at the right time, followed by appropriate transportation and storage, is critical for reliable laboratory diagnosis and implementation of effective disease-control measures. The programme therefore focused on revisiting these fundamentals so as to strengthen field-to-laboratory practices.

The inaugural session was attended by **Dr Divakar Hemadri, ADG (Animal Health), ICAR; Dr R.P. Singh, Former Director, ICAR-NIFMD; and Dr Sandeep Kumar Singh, Joint Commissioner, DAHD**, along with other DAHD officers and PIs/Co-PIs of 32 FMD network laboratories. Dr J. K. Mohapatra, Director, ICAR-NIFMD, welcomed the dignitaries and participants in the inaugural session. In his opening remarks, Dr Divakar Hemadri emphasised the importance of the FMD Awareness Programme and the relevance of the theme “Foot and Mouth Disease Diagnosis: Back to the Basics.” He highlighted the need for investigation of every single outbreak, early detection, and prompt action for effective control of FMD outbreaks. Dr R.P. Singh highlighted the importance of such an event and expressed satisfaction over organizing this capacity building programme. Dr Mohapatra also highlighted the importance of strengthening basic procedures for sample collection in the evolving FMD scenario.

The scientific presentations by ICAR-NIFMD scientists covered standard practices to be adopted for a variety of appropriate sample matrices recommended for collection from FMD-suspected animals and emphasized biosafety and biosecurity practices to be followed from collection through transportation to storage in the referral laboratories. Interactive discussions with the participants provided an opportunity to address practical issues encountered in the field and diagnostic laboratories.

The FMD Awareness Programme has been planned as a two-stage capacity-building initiative. The online programme conducted by ICAR-NIFMD constitutes Stage I, providing technical inputs to the FMD network laboratories. In Stage II, the PIs/Co-PIs of the network centres will organise similar awareness and capacity-building programmes for the field veterinarians and persons involved in disease diagnosis in their respective states, with emphasis on practical aspects of sample selection, packaging, transportation and storage. This cascading approach will propagate the technical inputs from the national reference laboratory to the field level, where the process of surveillance begins. Through the FMD Awareness Month initiative, ICAR-NIFMD aims to promote greater uniformity in sample collection and

handling practices, strengthen the field-to-laboratory diagnostic chain, and support effective foolproof FMD surveillance across the country. The initiative contributes to the broader vision of building an “FMD Aware Country”, supported by appropriate field surveillance, reliable laboratory diagnosis and timely disease-control interventions.

