# Holidaymakers face up to £5,000 fines for carrying banned food amid foot and mouth outbreak



Holidaymakers must take heed of newly introduced restrictions that could result in fines as steep as £5,000 for attempting to bring certain food items into the UK. Amid an outbreak of foot and mouth disease (FMD) across parts of Europe, travellers returning from popular destinations such as Spain, France, Italy, and Greece are required to avoid carrying prohibited items in their luggage, regardless of where or how these goods were purchased, including duty-free shops.

The UK government has outlined that items such as sandwiches, cheese, cured meats, raw meats, and milk are off-limits for personal importation into Great Britain from all EU countries. Individuals discovered with these items at border control face the choice of surrendering them or having them seized and destroyed. The penalties are part of broader efforts to shield British livestock from potential disease outbreaks that could arise from imported products.

FMD, which affects cattle, sheep, pigs, and other cloven-hoofed animals, poses a significant threat to the agricultural sector due to its highly contagious nature. Although the disease does not impact human health, its consequences can be devastating, leading to severe economic losses and restrictions on markets for farmers and livestock businesses. The government’s latest actions come as a response to a rising number of confirmed cases in various European countries, including Germany and Hungary. Earlier this year, the UK restricted the import of certain animal products from Germany, Slovakia, and Austria to safeguard its food security.

Farming Minister Daniel Zeichner expressed the government's commitment to protecting British farmers, stating, “This government will do whatever it takes to protect British farmers from foot and mouth.” He underscored that the newly implemented restrictions are a proactive measure to enforce biosecurity and preserve the integrity of the country’s livestock sector. In a similar vein, Dr Jorge Martin-Almagro, the UK Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer for international trade affairs, emphasised the need for strict vigilance and robust contingency plans to manage the risks posed by the disease. He urged all livestock keepers to maintain impeccable biosecurity standards and report any signs of disease immediately.

While the UK has implemented stringent border controls, there are limited exemptions in place. These include allowances for specific items such as infant milk, medical foods, and certain composite products like confectionery and baked goods, which do not pose a risk of FMD transmission.

Historically, foot and mouth disease has prompted drastic measures in the UK, most notably during the severe outbreak in 2001, which saw widespread restrictions on public access to rural areas and farms to control the spread of the disease. During that time, the National Farmers' Union encouraged the public to avoid all interactions with areas where livestock were present.

Moving forward, as travel regulations continue to evolve in response to health crises, holidaymakers should remain informed to avoid hefty fines and contribute to the ongoing efforts in safeguarding the agricultural landscape of the UK.

### Reference Map

* Paragraph 1: [[1]](https://www.chroniclelive.co.uk/whats-on/travel-tourism/travellers-issued-5000-fine-warning-31619953)
* Paragraph 2: [[1]](https://www.chroniclelive.co.uk/whats-on/travel-tourism/travellers-issued-5000-fine-warning-31619953)
* Paragraph 3: [[1]](https://www.chroniclelive.co.uk/whats-on/travel-tourism/travellers-issued-5000-fine-warning-31619953), [[2]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-introduces-import-ban-of-cattle-pigs-and-sheep-from-germany-to-protect-farmers-after-foot-and-mouth-case)
* Paragraph 4: [[1]](https://www.chroniclelive.co.uk/whats-on/travel-tourism/travellers-issued-5000-fine-warning-31619953), [[7]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/crkexpm1pyeo)
* Paragraph 5: [[2]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-introduces-import-ban-of-cattle-pigs-and-sheep-from-germany-to-protect-farmers-after-foot-and-mouth-case)
* Paragraph 6: [[2]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-introduces-import-ban-of-cattle-pigs-and-sheep-from-germany-to-protect-farmers-after-foot-and-mouth-case), [[4]](https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/jan/14/uk-bans-german-pork-products-foot-and-mouth-outbreak-near-berlin)
* Paragraph 7: [[1]](https://www.chroniclelive.co.uk/whats-on/travel-tourism/travellers-issued-5000-fine-warning-31619953), [[3]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2001/mar/19/footandmouth.tourismandfootandmouth1)
* Paragraph 8: [[6]](https://food.ec.europa.eu/animals/animal-diseases/diseases-and-control-measures/foot-and-mouth-disease_en)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.chroniclelive.co.uk/whats-on/travel-tourism/travellers-issued-5000-fine-warning-31619953> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-introduces-import-ban-of-cattle-pigs-and-sheep-from-germany-to-protect-farmers-after-foot-and-mouth-case> - The UK government has implemented an import ban on cattle, pigs, and sheep from Germany following a confirmed case of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) near Berlin. This measure aims to protect British farmers and livestock by preventing the spread of the disease. The ban includes live animals and their products, such as meat and dairy. The Chief Veterinary Officer urges livestock keepers to remain vigilant and maintain strict biosecurity measures to safeguard the UK's food security and agricultural sector.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2001/mar/19/footandmouth.tourismandfootandmouth1> - During the 2001 foot-and-mouth disease outbreak in the UK, strict restrictions were imposed on public access to rural areas to prevent the spread of the disease. The National Farmers' Union urged the public to avoid walking on farmland, moorland, footpaths, and bridleways where livestock might be grazing. Violations of these restrictions could result in fines up to £5,000. The article emphasizes the importance of adhering to these measures to protect the agricultural industry and prevent further spread of the disease.
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/jan/14/uk-bans-german-pork-products-foot-and-mouth-outbreak-near-berlin> - In January 2025, the UK government banned imports of German pork, lamb, beef, and dairy products following a confirmed case of foot-and-mouth disease near Berlin. The ban also includes live cattle, sheep, and pigs, as well as other susceptible animals. This decision aims to prevent the spread of FMD to the UK, where no cases have been reported. The Chief Veterinary Officer calls for vigilance among farmers and livestock keepers to maintain biosecurity and protect the UK's agricultural sector.
5. <https://www.just-food.com/news/uk-limited-restrictions-on-footpaths-and-public-rights-of-way-to-control-the-spread-of-foot-and-mouth-disease/> - In response to the 2001 foot-and-mouth disease outbreak, the UK government implemented statutory powers allowing local authorities to close footpaths and rights of way to control the spread of the disease. Agriculture Minister Nick Brown advised the public to avoid unnecessary visits to farms and maintain distance from livestock. These measures were enforced where necessary to prevent the transmission of FMD and protect the agricultural industry.
6. <https://food.ec.europa.eu/animals/animal-diseases/diseases-and-control-measures/foot-and-mouth-disease_en> - The European Commission provides detailed information on foot-and-mouth disease (FMD), including its impact on livestock and the measures taken to control its spread. FMD is a highly contagious viral disease affecting cattle, sheep, pigs, and other cloven-hoofed animals. The Commission outlines the emergency measures implemented in affected countries, such as Hungary and Slovakia, to contain outbreaks and prevent further transmission. These measures include culling infected animals, establishing restricted zones, and conducting intensive surveillance.
7. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/crkexpm1pyeo> - Following a confirmed case of foot-and-mouth disease in Germany, the Isle of Man imposed restrictions on the importation of animals, meat, dairy, and animal products from Germany. The Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture updated its legislation to align with UK measures, banning imports of pigs, sheep, cattle, and related products. The Chief Veterinary Officer emphasized the importance of vigilance and adherence to biosecurity measures to prevent the spread of this disease, which poses no risk to human health but is highly contagious among livestock.