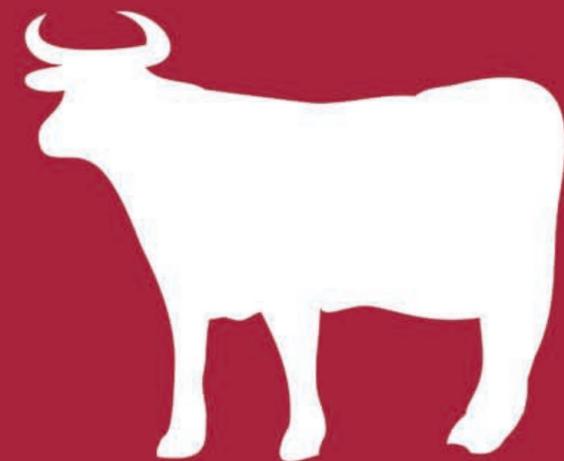


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Key Facts

- Rinderpest was known before the Roman era, when plagues of rinderpest killed hundreds of millions of cattle in Europe, Asia and Africa.
- There were attempts to vaccinate animals as early as 1744 in the Netherlands and England, and by the beginning of the twentieth century an effective vaccine was developed.
- An outbreak of Rinderpest in Belgium in 1920 was the impetus for international cooperation in controlling animal diseases leading to the establishment of the OIE in 1924.
- An international campaign against rinderpest has progressively reduced the number of countries affected and rinderpest is targeted to be completely eliminated from the world in the coming years.

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Rinderpest



What is Rinderpest ?

Rinderpest, also known as cattle plague, is a contagious viral disease affecting mainly cattle and buffalo. Rinderpest is caused by a virus in the family *Paramyxoviridae*, genus *Morbillivirus*. Many species of wild and domestic cloven-footed animals, including sheep and goats, show milder symptoms of the disease if infected, but the mortality rate can reach 100 per cent in a susceptible cattle or buffalo herd, the most commonly affected species.

The guidelines for surveillance of Rinderpest can be found in the Chapter 8.13, Article 8.13.21 of the OIE *Animal Health Code* (2009). Rinderpest is a disease for which the OIE established official recognition of the sanitary status of countries and zones.

Rinderpest is a disease listed in the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) *Terrestrial Animal Code* (2009; Chapter 1.2, Article 1.2.3) and must be reported to the OIE (as per Chapter 1.1 Notification of diseases and epidemiological information).



Rinderpest



Where is the disease found ?

Rinderpest has historically occurred in Europe, Africa and Asia. Nowadays it is restricted to a few zones in Africa and may in fact already be eliminated.

How is the disease spread ?

Rinderpest is spread by contact between animals carrying the virus and susceptible animals. The virus is found in nasal secretions a few days before the clinical signs appear. As the disease progresses the virus is found in most body fluids and either death ensues, or the animal recovers, develops immunity and clears the virus from the body.

Other than cattle and buffalo, rinderpest can infect zebu, water buffaloes, African buffaloes, eland, kudu, wildebeest, various antelopes, bushpigs, warthogs, giraffes, sheep, and goats. Wild animals can carry the virus without showing signs of disease and can, in a few cases, (re) introduce the disease into domestic animals by contact.

What are the clinical signs?

In cattle, the most susceptible species, classical signs of the disease include fever, erosive lesions in the mouth, discharge from the nose and eyes, profuse diarrhea, and dehydration, often leading to death within 10 to 15 days. This is now rarely seen, but a milder form of the disease, with the potential to regain classical characteristics, still may occur in East Africa. In other species the disease is milder.

How is the disease diagnosed?

The clinical signs especially in milder cases do not point specifically to rinderpest. Serological tests indicate animals exposed to the virus, while a definitive diagnosis is based on identifying the virus from blood or tissues, according to the standards in Chapter 2.1.15 of the OIE *Manual of Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines for Terrestrial Animals* (2008).

What is being done to prevent or control this disease?

When rinderpest is detected in a previously free area, the full animal disease emergency response measures would include:

- movement control,
- destruction of infected and contact animals,
- disposal of carcasses and infective material,
- sanitation and disinfection.

With the success in controlling rinderpest, today the focus is the complete elimination of the disease. Animals that recover have lifetime immunity, and vaccination has led to a continuous decline in the prevalence of rinderpest in the world.

A program named the Global Rinderpest Eradication Programme (GREP) coordinated by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) since the 1980s, in collaboration with OIE and major donors such as the European Commission and based on OIE surveillance and control guidelines and official recognition pathway has successfully reduced the number of countries affected by rinderpest. The world will likely be officially declared free of rinderpest in the coming years.

What is the Public Health Risk ?

There is no public health risk, since rinderpest does not affect people.

Disease-free Status

Rinderpest is a disease for which the OIE established official recognition of the sanitary status of countries. The OIE has defined a transparent, science-based and impartial procedure for the recognition of Rinderpest disease status of Member Countries and Territories.

