Vajra-Sat: DAHD's national tabletop drill on foot-and-mouth SAT-1

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News

The Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying (DAHD), under the Union Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, with the ICAR–National Institute of Veterinary Epidemiology and Disease Informatics (ICAR-NIVEDI), held 'VAJRA-SAT', a two-day national tabletop exercise. It was held in Bengaluru, Karnataka, on 4–5 November 2026. Through simulated scenarios it rehearsed India's response if SAT-1 – an exotic serotype of the foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) virus never reported in India – enters the country. The theme was 'Detect Early, Confirm Fast, Contain Together'. 83 participants took part from the animal husbandry departments of 25 States and 3 Union Territories, ICAR institutes, laboratories, veterinary universities, vaccine makers, and defence and border-guarding agencies. ICAR noted that the FMD vaccines now used in India do not protect against SAT-1. DAHD announced that regional FMD laboratories and Regional Disease Diagnostic Laboratories will be strengthened under the Pandemic Fund.

Key facts for the exam

Point	Details
Dates, venue	4–5 Nov 2026, Bengaluru
Organisers	DAHD + ICAR-NIVEDI, Bengaluru
Type	Two-day national tabletop exercise

Point	Details
Target	FMD serotype SAT-1 (exotic to India)
Theme	Detect Early, Confirm Fast, Contain Together
Participants	83 – from 25 States, 3 UTs
Vaccine gap	Current FMD vaccines do not cover SAT-1
Funding	Pandemic Fund – regional labs to be strengthened
Recent spread	Iraq, Bahrain, Kuwait, Türkiye (2025)

Background

- Foot-and-mouth disease (FMD): a highly contagious viral disease of cloven-hoofed animals such as cattle, buffalo, goats, sheep and pigs. Cause: an Aphthovirus of the family Picornaviridae. It has seven serotypes – O, A, C, Asia-1, SAT-1, SAT-2 and SAT-3; immunity to one does not protect against another. Signs include blisters in the mouth, on the tongue and the feet, heavy salivation, fever and a sharp fall in milk yield. The SAT ('Southern African Territories') types are found mainly in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Why now: in 2025 the SAT-1 type spread outside Africa to Iraq, Bahrain, Kuwait and Türkiye, prompting an alert from the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). It could reach India through livestock and meat trade and cross-border animal movement, hence this preparedness drill. A country's official FMD-free status is recognised by the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH; formerly OIE, 1924, headquarters Paris).
- Economy and schemes: India is the world's largest milk producer, and FMD hits milk output and meat exports hard. The National Animal Disease Control Programme (NADCP) is a 100% centrally funded scheme against FMD and brucellosis: FMD control by 2025 and eradication by 2030, with six-monthly mass vaccination. The Pandemic Fund (Sept 2022), for which the World Bank is trustee and hosts the secretariat, has given a US$25 million grant to DAHD's animal-health security project, implemented with FAO, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.
- A 'tabletop exercise' moves no animals or teams in the field; participants talk through a simulated outbreak in a room to test who does what in detection, lab confirmation, movement control, emergency vaccination and communication. Rapid serotype confirmation by ICAR-NIFMD, rapid response teams and making a SAT-1 vaccine in India were discussed; the exercise report will feed into the national FMD contingency plan.

Tamil Nadu link: In Tamil Nadu, livestock vaccines are made by the Institute of Veterinary Preventive Medicine (IVPM), Ranipet; it produces vaccines against haemorrhagic septicaemia (HS), black quarter (BQ), anthrax, sheep pox and Ranikhet disease. A State-wide FMD outbreak in 2013 killed thousands of cattle in Tamil Nadu. Under NADCP, FMD vaccination camps are held twice a year in the State.

Frequently asked questions

What is this news about?

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What are the key facts to remember for the exam?

Dates, venue: 4–5 Nov 2026, Bengaluru; Organisers: DAHD + ICAR-NIVEDI, Bengaluru; Type: Two-day national tabletop exercise; Target: FMD serotype SAT-1 (exotic to India).

What is the background to this news?

Foot-and-mouth disease (FMD): a highly contagious viral disease of cloven-hoofed animals such as cattle, buffalo, goats, sheep and pigs.

Practice questions (with answers)

1. Foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) of livestock is caused by which type of microbe?

A) Bacterium

B) Fungus

C) Virus

D) Protozoan

Answer: C – Explanation: A virus – an Aphthovirus of the family Picornaviridae, with seven serotypes: O, A, C, Asia-1, SAT-1, SAT-2 and SAT-3.

2. Which international body officially recognises a country as free of foot-and-mouth disease?

A) WOAH

B) FAO

C) WHO

D) UNEP

Answer: A – Explanation: WOAH – World Organisation for Animal Health (formerly OIE, 1924), headquartered in Paris. FAO is headquartered in Rome.

3. The National Animal Disease Control Programme (NADCP), launched in 2019, targets which two diseases?

A) FMD, bird flu

B) FMD, brucellosis

C) Anthrax, rabies

D) Lumpy skin, PPR

Answer: B – Explanation: FMD and brucellosis – 100% central funding; aims to control FMD by 2025 and eradicate it by 2030.

4. Where is Tamil Nadu's Institute of Veterinary Preventive Medicine (IVPM), which makes livestock vaccines, located?

A) Namakkal

B) Hosur

C) Ranipet

D) Kattupakkam

Answer: C – Explanation: Ranipet – it makes vaccines against haemorrhagic septicaemia, black quarter, anthrax, sheep pox and Ranikhet disease.

5. Which institution is the trustee of the Pandemic Fund, which gave a grant to DAHD's animal-health project?

A) ADB

B) WHO

C) IMF

D) World Bank

Answer: D – Explanation: The World Bank – trustee and host of the secretariat (Sept 2022). India's project is implemented with FAO, the World Bank and ADB.

Sources: ICAR; IANS; DAHD NADCP guidelines; World Bank; Pandemic Fund; UK DEFRA; FAO; TN Open Data (IVPM Ranipet); DT Next. © Shanmugam IAS Academy.