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Press statement by the Minister for Health: Further precautions against foot and mouth disease

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PRESS STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH, DR D.N. EVERINGHAM
FURTHER PRECAUTIONS AGAINST FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE

The Minister for Health, Dr Doug. Everingham, today sought the co-operation of Australian visitors to the Indonesian island of Bali in preventing the introduction of foot and mouth disease into Australia.

If it were introduced, the disease would seriously endanger Australia's livestock industry and could cost the country hundreds of millions of dollars and depress Australia's standard of living.

Dr Everingham said a Health Department officer who had just returned from a visit to Bali had reported that the situation was now much more serious.

The disease had spread widely throughout the island, and was present in a number of areas frequented by Australian tourists.

Bali was an increasingly popular holiday resort, and more than 1400 Australians had visited the island in May.

Dr Everingham said this heavy traffic increased the chances of introduction of the disease to Australia, and he asked that all returning visitors take special precautions to prevent this.

He urged firstly that all travellers avoid contact with livestock during their stay on the island.

Secondly, he asked people to ensure that their clothing and footwear were clean before they left the island.

Travellers would still be required to report to quarantine officers on arrival in Australia for inspection of clothing and shoes, but personal attention to these matters beforehand would ensure less delay on arrival.

The Minister said shoes, which appeared to have been soiled would still be disinfected by quarantine officers, but it was a much simpler and quicker procedure if the shoes had been thoroughly cleaned first.

Thirdly, Dr Everingham asked that travellers avoid contact with live cattle, sheep, goats or pigs for at least two weeks after returning home.

The Minister said strict quarantine precautions would continue to be applied as long as the disease remained active in Bali.

He said the Indonesian Government had drawn on the advice of an Australian team of experts to plan a foot and mouth disease control and eradication program.

The Australian Development Assistance Agency had arranged for the visit of these experts, including Mr R.W. Gee, First Assistant Director-General (Quarantine) of the Australian Department of Health, and representatives of the C.S.I.R.O. Division of Animal Health and the Department of Housing and Construction.

Dr Everingham said Australia's technical assistance to Indonesia would complement our own precautions and would assist in completing a barrier along our Northern coast against introduction of foot and mouth.

He said the Australian Health Department had found it necessary to step up surveillance of our northern shores to minimise the risk of exotic disease being imported by unauthorised or emergency landings of small ships and aircraft.

Canberra, 27 June, 1974.