

# Johor mulls importing more beef following FMD outbreak

**JOHOR BARU:** With Hari Raya just around the corner, Johor may have to import beef to meet demand, after an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) among cows in Mersing.

State Agriculture and Agro-based Industries Committee chairman Ismail Mohamed said this must be done if there was great demand for beef in the next couple of weeks.

The Agriculture and Agro-based Industries Ministry has issued permits for the import of beef due to the outbreak and coming festive occasion. The state government has appointed five local suppliers to import the meat, but only if the need arises, Ismail said.

He downplayed worries over FMD, saying not many cows were affected and that the situation was under control.

“Cows in enclosures or in feedlots are healthy and do not show any symptoms of

FMD. Only cattle that were roaming tested positive,” he said when contacted yesterday.

Ismail pointed out that in Mersing alone, there were 297 farmers with 14,935 in livestock – 8,708 cows, 3,260 buffaloes, 2,419 sheep and 548 lambs.

The Johor Veterinary Department started vaccinating cows against FMD in nearby Teriang and Endau from June 7.

Further tests by the department found that only 43 cows, belonging to 11 farmers, have the disease at this time.

Ismail said the next step was to find the source of the infection and how it was able to spread.

Livestock farmers in Mersing have told *The Star* that they could lose tens of thousands of ringgit if people stay away from beef due to the outbreak.

STAR  
05/6