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Disease-free farm draws attention amid foot-and-mouth outbreak

One Gyeonggi Province-area farmer says a feeding a special solution to cattle has helped his farm dodge the disease

The Hankyoreh



» Farmer Myeong In-gu sprays fermented EM solution toward his cattle, Jan. 14. (Photo by Park Kyung-man)

Park Kyung-man Senior Staff Writer

With the foot-and-mouth disease outbreak that erupted in Andong, North Gyeongsang Province, showing no signs of abating as it marks its fiftieth day Monday, attention is focusing on the prevention and isolation measures used by a livestock farm in Yeoncheon, Gyeonggi Province, where 150 Korean beef cattle remain uninfected despite the presence of the disease in nearby areas.

Myeong In-gu, 58, a farmer in Jeondong Village, Baekhak Township, in Yeoncheon, which lies alongside the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), said that he begins and ends each day by mixing effective microorganisms (EM) into feed and feeding it to the cattle, then mixing it with water and spraying down the area around the stall. When Myeong first set out with the sprayer Friday afternoon and began spraying the EM water at the stall play area, the sun-baked cattle began clustering around one by one. Mothers and calves alike stretched their heads to receive the moist drizzle of EM solution. Some cattle stuck out their long tongues and lapped up the solution from the sides of their noses.

Myeong's farm is in a village adjacent to Nogok Village in Baekhak Township, where foot-and-mouth disease first spread to northern Gyeonggi Province on Dec. 15 of last year. The risk area where the disease has spread includes a farm located 200 meters in front of Myeong's. Furthermore, his animals were in danger of slaughter due to the visit of employees of a manure treatment company who had traveled to the Andong area, where the outbreak first erupted.

"The health authorities came a full four times to investigate, but I was confident," Myeong said. "I told them to pick any cow they liked and take a blood sample."

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The slaughter was narrowly avoided. As the main reason for avoiding any foot-and-mouth infections to date, Myeong gives “cattle health management using EM.”

He first became interested in EM after losing two cattle to brucellosis four years ago. In the EM production device, which he purchased for 3 million Won (\$2,694), three liters of microbes, at a cost of around 12,000 Won, are mixed with 10 kilograms of sugar (15,000 Won) and eight kilograms of citric acid (16,000 Won) to produce 160 liters of fermented EM solution five days later. This amount is enough to deliver to 150 cattle for around ten days. Myeong gave free EM to six farms in Yangju and Paju, and those farms have also managed to dodge the foot-and-mouth flood thus far.

Myeong, who has raised cattle out on the farm for forty years, said that he does not pin his hopes on government quarantine measures alone. He purchased disinfectant and sprayed it at the farm’s entry road, and on Dec. 26, and he personally performed inoculations with vaccine. His cattle, which graze on a field covering around 70 thousand square meters of hilly land, seemed to be growing healthfully even amid bitter subzero temperatures.

Please direct questions or comments to [englishhani@hani.co.kr]

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