



agriculture

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MEDIA STATEMENT

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ARRIVAL OF VACCINES ACCELERATES NATIONAL WAR AGAINST FMD

The Minister of Agriculture, Mr John Steenhuisen, today at OR Tambo International oversaw the arrival of the first consignment of one million high-potency Foot and mouth disease (FMD) vaccines, strengthening South Africa's expanding vaccination effort already underway in affected areas.

This shipment from Biogénesis Bagó in Argentina, forms part of a sustained supply pipeline, with further consignments scheduled to arrive over the coming weeks, including vaccine sourced from BVI in Botswana and Dollvet in Turkey.

By end of March a total of over five million vaccines will have entered the country from the three international suppliers.

Locally, the Agriculture Research Council (ARC) has committed to produce 20 000 vaccines per week and scaling up to 200 000 per week in 2027.

The additional doses will allow authorities to scale up from targeted outbreak response to broader suppression of viral circulation in high-risk regions.

“Vaccination has already begun in affected areas, but supply has limited the speed and coverage,” said Minister Steenhuisen. “With this arrival, we can now accelerate protection across priority provinces and stabilise the livestock sector.”

The department has confirmed that outbreaks have now been reported across all provinces, with quarantine measures, movement restrictions and surveillance continuing nationwide. A risk-based vaccination approach will prioritise outbreak epicentres in

KwaZulu-Natal, parts of Gauteng, Free State and North West, while high-risk and border regions will follow structured vaccination programmes.

This strategy combines vaccination with strengthened diagnostics, traceability and movement controls to progressively restore internationally recognised disease-free status.

The million doses of vaccine will be distributed as follow: KwaZulu-Natal 200 000 doses; Mpumalanga 100 000 doses; North West 100 000 doses; Free State 200 000 doses; Eastern Cape 150 000 doses; Limpopo 100 000 doses; Gauteng 70 000 doses; Northern Cape 50 000 doses; and Western Cape 30 000 doses.

The minister stressed that vaccines alone will not defeat the disease.

“Quarantine rules, movement permits and biosecurity measures exist to protect every farmer in the country. Those who deliberately move animals illegally, conceal infections, or ignore restrictions threaten the recovery of the entire sector,” he said. “Where there is wilful non-compliance, we will work with law-enforcement authorities and the full might of the law will be applied.”

Minister Steenhuisen also confirmed that he will visit Mooi River in KwaZulu-Natal on 27 February to vaccinate dairy cattle alongside veterinarians and farmers, acknowledging the severe impact the outbreak has had on the dairy sector.

“The dairy industry has been among the hardest hit with significant production losses, disrupted markets and immense strain on farming families. That visit marks the practical beginning of recovery at farm level. Each vaccinated herd means stability returning to a business, wages returning to workers and milk returning to shelves.”

“We are moving step by step from crisis management to control,” Minister Steenhuisen concluded. “Vaccines are arriving, the system is scaling up, and compliance will be enforced. Working together, we will stabilise the sector and rebuild confidence in South Africa’s animal-health system.”

FMD Support Line

To better support our farming community, the department has established a dedicated FMD Control Centre. Starting this Wednesday, farmers can access a toll-free support line for expert guidance on FMD:

Toll-Free FMD Support Line: 0860 246 640

- Information about FMD symptoms;
- Advice on movement controls and permits;
- Updates on vaccine availability and vaccinations; and
- Practical tips on how to keep your farm biosecure.

The department also has an active WhatsApp channel that is dedicated to FMD Updates:

<https://whatsapp.com/channel/0029Vags5R83qvWWZOhk9946>

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