agriculture
Department:
Agriculture
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Private Bag X250, Pretoria, 0001; 20 Steve Biko Street, Pretoria, 0001
Tel: 012 319 6000; E-mail: queries@nda.gov.za; Web: www.nda.gov.za

MEDIA STATEMENT **20 MAY 2025**

FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE VACCINE ROLLOUT UNDERWAY IN SOUTH AFRICA

The Minister of Agriculture, John Steenhuisen, on 19 June 2025 announced the arrival of the much-needed vaccine from Botswana to combat the persistent Foot and mouth disease (FMD) outbreaks, especially in KwaZulu-Natal and those farms in other provinces where the disease has been identified. “The arrival of these vaccines marks a significant step in our efforts to contain the spread of FMD, enhance biosecurity, and explore long-term solutions, including local vaccine production,” Minister Steenhuisen said.

Owing to the biological nature of the vaccine, it was escorted by police to the Onderstepoort Biological Products (OBP) headquarters for distribution. This entity of the Department of Agriculture will oversee the distribution of the vaccines to State Veterinarians in the affected areas, and they will be administered free of charge. With this consignment, the traditional vaccination areas for preventive vaccination in Limpopo and Mpumalanga will also be covered. A second batch of vaccines is on order with the Botswana Vaccine Institute.

Minister Steenhuisen emphasised that vaccination of cattle is part of the department’s strategy to get FMD under control. Additionally, the department will soon hold discussions with industry to develop a long-term plan to render the country FMD free, which will start with clear regionalisation to ensure that South Africa continues to export its incredible beef and red meat products to the rest of the world.

Current status of the outbreaks

During the past two weeks, in addition to the continued outbreaks in KwaZulu-Natal, the disease was detected in pockets in Gauteng, North West and Mpumalanga. In Gauteng, there are clusters of outbreaks in the East Rand, West Rand and around Heidelberg. The outbreaks around Heidelberg are also affecting farms in Mpumalanga. In the North West, outbreaks have

been reported around Ventersdorp, Potchefstroom and Rustenburg. FMD-positive properties have been placed under quarantine and vaccination of affected animals has commenced.

Biosecurity is everybody's responsibility

"All care is being taken by our veterinary services and abattoirs to ensure that beef and beef products from FMD-positive animals are safe for consumption," said Minister Steenhuisen. He emphasised that FMD is not harmful to humans, and that consumers can continue buying beef products with confidence. He highlighted that biosecurity should be taken more seriously. "Biosecurity is something that has to be everybody's responsibility, from the farmgate, to the auction house, to the abattoir, to the consumer. We all have a role to play in ensuring that South Africa become synonymous with the highest level of biosecurity—that we adhere to the regulations," he stated.

The minister recently gazetted new interim regulations for the movement and sale of animals which will be strictly enforced. "Those who break the law must feel the consequences because there are grave economic consequences if the law is broken in this regard," concluded Minister Steenhuisen. Section 11 of the Animal Diseases Act, 1984 (Act No. 35 of 1984) imposes a legal duty on any owner or manager of animals to take all reasonable steps to prevent their animals from becoming infected with any disease and to prevent the spread of any disease from their animals or land to other animals or other properties.

Minister Steenhuisen conveys his sincere gratitude to the South African Police Service (SAPS) for their support in ensuring the vaccine is escorted safely into the country.

For further information, contact:
Dipepeneneng Serage
Deputy Director-General: Agricultural Production, Biosecurity and Natural Resources Management
060 551 5686

Joylene van Wyk
Director: Media Liaison: Ministry of Agriculture
joylenev@nda.gov.za / 083 292 7399

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