MINISTRY
AGRICULTURE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Private Bag X250, PRETORIA, 0001 • Tel.: +27 12 312 9395
Private Bag X9087, CAPE TOWN, 8000 • Tel.: +27 21 467 4502 •
Web: www.dalrrd.gov.za

Media release

Immediate release **Date 25 October 2024**

UPDATE ON OUTBREAKS OF FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Four Provinces Declared Free from Foot and Mouth Disease Outbreaks

The Department of Agriculture is pleased to announce that the Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) outbreak, which occurred during 2021-2022, has been successfully resolved in the North West, Free State, Gauteng, and Mpumalanga Provinces. These provinces, which were initially impacted by the outbreak, have now completed comprehensive testing of animals on quarantined farms. The results indicate that the FMD virus is no longer present.

The World Organization for Animal Health has confirmed that the outbreak in these regions has officially been closed. However, it is important to note that the KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape Provinces remain affected by FMD outbreaks. Encouragingly, no new signs of the disease have been reported in these two provinces over the past month.

The Minister of Agriculture extends his gratitude to all stakeholders for adhering to control measures, which helped prevent the further spread of the disease. The cooperative efforts of all role players have been instrumental in managing this outbreak and safeguarding the country's livestock industry.

Status Update on Foot and Mouth Disease in the Eastern Cape

In the Humansdorp area, 37 farms have now been confirmed positive for FMD, while a further 38 farms were pre-emptively vaccinated to prevent further spreading of the disease. Since the onset of the outbreak, approximately 130,000 animals have been vaccinated across the province.

Farms that are either infected or vaccinated remain under quarantine, with animal movements restricted. Movement from these farms are only permitted for direct slaughter

with state veterinary approval. Farm owners are required to enforce strict biosecurity measures to prevent the disease from spreading through animals, vehicles, equipment, or people.

On 26 July 2024, the Department declared an FMD Disease Management Area (DMA), covering parts of the Kouga and Kou-Kamma Municipalities. Animal movements into, through, within, or out of this area are strictly controlled and require state veterinary permission. Farms within the DMA must be inspected, tested, and declared free of the disease before any animals are allowed to move. Four affected farms located on the borders of the DMA were placed under quarantine and, as a result, pose no risk of cattle movement. Surveillance around these farms has been concluded, and no further spread has been detected outside the DMA.

The Department is actively collaborating with law enforcement and Agri-Eastern Cape to investigate reports of illegal animal movements. Those found in breach of quarantine or DMA restrictions will face legal consequences. The public is urged to report any information regarding illegal movements or breaches of biosecurity.

In East London, the FMD outbreak has been successfully contained. The Department extends its gratitude to the affected farmers in the area for their vigilance and cooperation. Animals on these farms are being slaughtered in a controlled manner at designated abattoirs, ensuring that FMD risk materials are properly processed or disposed of. Only safe products are released into the local market. While meat from FMD-restricted farms cannot be exported due to certification limitations, it remains safe for human consumption.

The Director of Animal Health has designated three abattoirs to handle the slaughter of cloven-hoofed animals from FMD-quarantined farms. Seventeen farms have been granted permission for controlled slaughter at these abattoirs.

Festive Season Arrangements

Stakeholders are advised that the Onderstepoort laboratory will be closed from 16 December 2024 to 6 January 2025. During this period, only samples submitted on suspicion of infection will be analysed. Routine samples for movements, exports, and surveillance should be submitted in January 2025.

The Agri Eastern Cape (AgriEC) offices will close from 13 December 2024 and reopen on 6 January 2025. Owners planning to apply for movement permits during this time are encouraged to submit their applications by 1 December 2024.

The Department also urges holidaymakers visiting the affected areas to be mindful of the biosecurity measures in place. Please avoid entering affected farms, which remain under quarantine. No live animals or animal products are permitted to move off these farms.

National Movement Restrictions, Legal Responsibilities, Reporting Requirements and Biosecurity Protocols

In addition to the control measures within the DMA in the Eastern Cape Province, the July 2024 Gazette Notice stipulates that cloven-hoofed livestock across South Africa may only be moved if accompanied by a health declaration from the owner, attesting to the animals'

health at the time of movement. While this has been a legal requirement since October 2022, its importance is being reiterated to prevent the further spread of FMD.

The Department of Agriculture strongly advises all livestock farmers nationwide to limit animal movement as much as possible. Cloven-hoofed animals should not be moved unless absolutely necessary. Limiting movement provides an opportunity to identify and quarantine further undetected, affected properties, thus preventing any further spread of the disease. The significance of the incubation period for FMD cannot be overstated. During this period, animals may appear healthy while shedding the virus and not yet displaying clinical signs of the disease.

Farmers are again urged to observe stringent biosecurity measures on their farms to protect their herds from infection. Section 11 of the Animal Diseases Act imposes a legal duty on animal owners or managers to take all reasonable steps to prevent their animals from becoming infected and to prevent the spread of any disease from their animals or land to others.

Essential Biosecurity Measures Include:

- Any cattle, sheep, or goats newly introduced to a farm must be kept separate from resident herds for at least 28 days.
- Only introduce animals accompanied by a health declaration from known clean farms.
- Prevent nose-to-nose contact between farm animals and animals outside the farm.
- Maintain secure farm boundaries and restrict access for people and vehicles as much as possible.
- Ensure that farm personnel have no contact with animals outside the property.
- Provide clean clothing and washing facilities for all visitors and personnel, and ensure thorough cleaning and disinfection of any vehicles and farming implements brought onto a property.
- Regularly consult with the responsible private and state veterinarian and animal health technician to refine biosecurity measures.

Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) is classified as a controlled animal disease under the Animal Diseases Act, 1984 (Act No. 35 of 1984), which mandates specific control measures, such as isolation and movement restrictions, enforced by Veterinary Services.

Any suspicious clinical symptoms, such as salivation, blisters in the mouth, limping, or hoof lesions, should be reported immediately to the local State Veterinarian, and such animals must not be moved under any circumstances.

For more information, contact:

Spokesperson on FMD: Ministry of Agriculture

Ms Sara-Lea van Eeden
Contact: +27 83 446 6109
Media Liaison Officer