agriculture, land reform & rural development
Department:
Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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# MEDIA RELEASE

## 13 SEPTEMBER 2024

## UPDATE ON OUTBREAK OF FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE IN EASTERN CAPE PROVINCE

On 26 July 2024, the Department of Agriculture declared a Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) Disease Management Area (DMA) to include parts of the Kouga and Kou-Kamma Municipalities in the Eastern Cape Province. The primary objective of the DMA is to prevent the spread of FMD from the affected areas, where outbreaks have been ongoing since May 2024. The DMA encompasses regions where control measures are strictly enforced to minimise the risk of disease transmission beyond the designated boundaries.

### Movement Permits Update

The following statistics reflect the movement permit applications processed to date by the
Department of Agriculture, in partnership with Agri Eastern Cape (Agri EC), who facilitate the processing of movement permits for livestock in and around the Disease Management Area (DMA) as part of ongoing efforts to control the spread of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD).

### Outside the DMA:

610 applications received, processed, and approved by the State Veterinary office.
19 applications denied due to various reasons, including non-compliance with processes, requests to move cattle to restricted areas such as Knysna, or attempting to move livestock from vaccinated farms to non-registered FMD abattoirs.

### Within the DMA:

25 applications received and sent to the relevant authorities at for approval.
19 applications approved.
6 applications pending.

**Sheep Movement (Out of Province):**

A total of 2,876 sheep have been permitted for movement to three different abattoirs for slaughter, these sheep are located outside the DMA but remain in the high surveillance zone.

The Department commends the relentless efforts of organised agriculture, animal health partners and all the role players in the value chain for helping to curb the spread of the disease.

**Current Status of Infected Farms**

Currently, 33 farms in the Humansdorp area and one farm in the East London area have been confirmed as positive for FMD and have undergone vaccination. The Minister of Agriculture has expressed serious concern over the recurring clinical signs on certain farms within the Disease Management Area (DMA) that were previously infected or vaccinated. This points to ongoing virus circulation on these farms and highlights the high risk of outward spread. Strict biosecurity measures are essential. Clinical signs of FMD have also been detected on two farms near the borders of the DMA. This serves as a strong warning to the farming communities in the area to rigorously enforce biosecurity protocols on their farms and adhere to the movement restrictions imposed within the DMA.

**Vaccination Strategy and Progress**

An additional 36 farms have been pre-emptively vaccinated to mitigate the severity of clinical signs in case of infection. Since the outbreak's onset in May 2024, a total of 96,906 cattle and 635 sheep have been vaccinated in the Eastern Cape. Over 12,000 animals have also received a second vaccination following reports of virus flare-ups on certain properties.

**Designated Abattoirs**

To assist farmers in reducing the number of animals on infected and/or vaccinated farms, the Director of Animal Health has designated two abattoirs for the slaughter of cloven-hoofed animals from farms under FMD quarantine. Four farms have been granted permission for controlled slaughter at these abattoirs. So far, 56 cattle have been slaughtered in the Humansdorp area and 40 in the East London area. Controlled slaughter ensures that FMD risk materials are properly processed or disposed of, with only safe products released into the local market. Meat from farms under FMD restrictions is not eligible for export due to certification limitations, but it remains safe for human consumption.

**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:**
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