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 **26 NOVEMBER 2025**

MINISTER STEENHUISEN UPS THE ANTE IN THE FIGHT AGAINST FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE

Today, the Minister of Agriculture, John Steenhuisen, acknowledged the immense hardship facing farmers across the country as they continue to battle one of the most persistent and damaging waves of Foot and mouth disease (FMD) the country has seen in decades. The minister emphasised that he hears the cries of farmers, mostly dairy farmers in KwaZulu-Natal, who have suffered losses, movement restrictions and severe disruptions to their livelihoods, particularly in districts such as Kokstad, Dundee, Underberg and Dannhauser, where new cases continue to emerge.

“As minister, I want our farmers to know that I see the impact this outbreak is having on their families, their businesses and their communities. I understand their frustration, and I share their determination to end this crisis,” he said.

As of November 2025, KwaZulu-Natal remains the epicentre of FMD, with 180 of the 274 unresolved outbreaks reported nationally. Despite the vaccination of 931 200 animals with government-procured vaccine stocks over the last three months, uncontrolled animal movement continues to undermine containment efforts and prolongs the crisis.

Minister Steenhuisen noted that while important progress has been made, the current trajectory is not acceptable. “We must be honest with the public and with our farming sector. This is a battle we are currently not winning. For this reason, we are now significantly strengthening our approach to regain control of the situation,” he said.

Recent outbreaks in the Kokstad area have prompted intensified vaccination in Estcourt and targeted preventive efforts in surrounding zones. Alongside these interventions, the Department of Agriculture has introduced limited relief measures for compliant farmers within the disease management areas, including permitting milk for local consumption following single pasteurisation.

The minister also expressed appreciation to industry players such as the Red Meat Industry Services (RIMS), which has stepped forward with tangible contributions. “I also want to thank the Milk Producers Organisation (MPO) for their purchase of 50 000 vaccine doses for roll out to dairy farmers across KwaZulu-Natal. These are exactly the type of partnerships that our country needs,” he said.

To date, the following dairy farms in KwaZulu-Natal have received FMD vaccines:

- Bergville: 3 000 doses;
- Estcourt: 2 500 doses;
- Winterton: an initial 1 500 doses, to be followed by an additional 3 000 doses;
- Dundee: 4 000 doses (from government vaccine stocks); and
- Spioenkop Dam area: 5 000 doses (from government vaccine stocks).

By February next year, the department aims to take delivery of two million doses of FMD vaccines in two separate consignments. To reduce dependence on imported vaccines, a new mid-scale vaccine production facility is being established as part of the national biosecurity strengthening programme. The aim is that between government and industry, an additional 1,5 million doses will be made available.

The Department of Agriculture has resolved to implement a comprehensive strategy to vaccinate the entire national herd. This initiative will position us to apply to the World Organisation of Animal Health (WOAH) for recognition of freedom with vaccination status. “This strategy aims to vaccinate South Africa’s national herd systematically, beginning with the hardest-hit provinces, namely: KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng, Free State, Mpumalanga and North West, which will submit their livestock numbers, as well as their number of quarantined farms. This plan, however, will rely on a consistent, high-quality vaccine supply.

To this end, Minister Steenhuisen confirmed that the government is working closely with the Onderstepoort Biological Products (OBP) and the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) on the formalisation of public-private partnerships with domestic industry and international partners, including China and Argentina, who have already offered technical cooperation and support regarding vaccine provision.

Minister Steenhuisen further stressed that the success of the FMD response depends not only on vaccines but also on law enforcement. Uncontrolled movement of animals remains the single biggest threat to the national containment efforts.

Minister Steenhuisen reaffirmed that the department will continue to stand with farmers and farming communities during this difficult period. “We recognise the emotional, financial, and operational strain this disease has placed on the sector. “We remain committed to doing everything possible to turn this outbreak around and rebuild resilience in the livestock industry. “We are also committed to improving our laboratory capacity to ensure that samples collected are analysed quickly and results are communicated timeously,” he stated.

This strengthened response forms part of the broader agricultural recovery programme and aligns with the minister’s ongoing commitment to safeguard animal health, protect rural economies and ensure long-term biosecurity preparedness.

For media enquiries, please contact:

Ms Joylene van Wyk
Director: Media Liaison, Ministry of Agriculture
Email: joylenev@nda.gov.za
Mobile: 083 292 7399 or 063 298 5661