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Media release

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UPDATE ON OUTBREAK OF FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE

The Department recently received test results confirming the ongoing presence of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) viruses in KwaZulu-Natal Province. Cattle at a dip tank in Mtubatuba have tested positive for FMD. These cattle showed clinical signs of FMD in December, prompting sample collection, and laboratory results confirmed the introduction of a SAT1 FMD virus into the area. Given that a SAT2 FMD event has been ongoing in the region since 2021, further investigations were conducted, confirming that the detected SAT1 virus is similar to one recently identified in the northern part of Kruger National Park.

Over the past two weeks, clinical signs of FMD have also been observed in districts around Vryheid and Newcastle. Laboratory tests have confirmed the presence of the FMD virus, with virus typing still in progress to determine whether these outbreaks were caused by a SAT1 or SAT2 strain.

Control measures within the Disease Management Area (DMA) remain unchanged. The affected dip tanks remain under quarantine, and vaccination efforts in the area continue. The vaccine being used covers all three FMD SAT strains. Dip tanks in newly affected areas have also been placed under quarantine.

These outbreaks highlight the persistent threat of FMD and the critical need for stringent control measures to prevent its spread. Agriculture Minister John Steenhuisen stressed the importance of strict compliance with biosecurity protocols and urged farmers and livestock owners to promptly report any suspected cases to veterinary authorities.

The Department reminds livestock owners that control measures implemented nationwide since October 2022 must be strictly followed to reduce the risk of further spread. These

measures include:

- Cloven-hoofed livestock across South Africa may only be moved if accompanied by a health declaration from the owner, confirming the animals' health at the time of movement.
- Any newly introduced cattle, sheep, or goats must be kept separate from resident herds for at least 28 days.

All livestock farmers across the country are strongly encouraged to limit animal movement as much as possible. Auctioneers and livestock owners should be particularly cautious when purchasing cloven-hoofed animals from provinces with active FMD outbreaks. No cloven-hoofed animals should be accepted from areas under FMD restrictions in KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape, Limpopo, and Mpumalanga Provinces.
Section 11 of the Animal Diseases Act imposes a legal duty on all animal owners or managers to take reasonable steps to prevent their animals from becoming infected and to prevent the spread of any disease from their animals or property to others.

Essential Biosecurity Measures:

- Limit or postpone the introduction of new animals whenever possible. If new animals must be introduced, they should come only from known clean farms with a valid health declaration.
- Prevent nose-to-nose contact between farm animals and animals outside the farm.
- Maintain secure farm boundaries.
- Restrict access to farms for people and vehicles as much as possible.

Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) is classified as a controlled animal disease under the Animal Diseases Act, 1984 (Act No. 35 of 1984). Any suspicious clinical symptoms—including excessive salivation, blisters in the mouth, limping, or hoof lesions—must be reported immediately to the local State Veterinarian. Infected animals must not be moved under any circumstances. The Act prescribes specific control measures, including isolation and movement restrictions, which are enforced by Veterinary Services.

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