



agriculture

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MEDIA STATEMENT

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NEW FMD CONTROL MEASURES GIVE FARMERS A CLEARER PATH TO RECOVERY WHILE PROTECTING TRADE

Minister of Agriculture, Mr John Steenhuisen, has approved new national Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) control measures that will provide farmers, veterinarians and veterinary authorities with a clear, practical and science-based framework for managing outbreaks while minimising unnecessary economic losses.

The measures, which will take effect upon publication in the Government Gazette, consolidate and replace previous directives issued under Section 9 of the Animal Diseases Act, including the 2019 FMD Contingency Plan, subsequent amendments and related protocols. For the first time, South Africa will have a single, integrated set of national control measures that clearly outline how outbreaks must be managed from detection through to recovery.

"South Africa's livestock producers need certainty. They need clear rules, sound science and practical pathways that allow them to manage outbreaks without unnecessarily jeopardising their livelihoods," said Minister Steenhuisen.

FMD remains one of the most economically devastating animal diseases facing livestock producers. An outbreak can disrupt production, restrict market access, threaten jobs and place immense financial pressure on farming families and rural communities. The new measures seek to strike a balance between protecting animal health and ensuring that farming businesses can continue operating safely wherever the scientific evidence allows.

Importantly, the measures clarify that animals which have been vaccinated but have never been infected and have not been subject to quarantine remain healthy animals and may continue to be traded and moved in accordance with normal requirements.

One of the most significant advances contained in the new framework is the introduction of clearer pathways for trade to continue during quarantine periods.

Rather than imposing blanket restrictions that unnecessarily prolong economic hardship, the measures establish scientifically informed timelines that allow livestock producers to resume certain activities once the risk of disease transmission has been adequately managed. Animals may be directed to designated FMD abattoirs from 16 days after a property has been declared clinically clear, while broader slaughter options become available after 42 days, including access to export-approved facilities.

"The objective is simple: protect animal health and stop the disease spreading, while ensuring that farmers can continue operating safely wherever possible. Disease control and economic sustainability cannot be treated as mutually exclusive goals," Minister Steenhuisen said.

The updated measures also substantially reduce unnecessary wastage of animal products and agricultural inputs.

Advances in scientific understanding of the FMD virus have demonstrated that certain materials do not pose a risk for as long as previously believed. As a result, fewer animal products need to be destroyed, reducing financial losses for producers while maintaining the highest standards of food safety and disease control. Feed, fodder and manure will similarly be managed according to scientifically established risk periods rather than blanket disposal requirements.

Another major reform is the move away from the historic assumption that entire herds must be removed before quarantine can be lifted.

Under the new framework, producers will have several pathways available to achieve disease recovery and lift quarantine restrictions. Depending on the circumstances, farms may remove animals, restock with vaccinated animals or restock with animals from FMD-free sources. These options provide significantly greater flexibility and reduce the financial devastation that can result from unnecessary whole-herd depopulation.

"For many farmers, particularly those operating under difficult financial conditions, the prospect of losing an entire herd can be devastating. These measures introduce practical alternatives that are scientifically sound and economically realistic," said Minister Steenhuisen.

For the first time, the measures also provide specific provisions for communal and peri-urban livestock systems.

Traditional outbreak management approaches have often been designed around commercial farming operations. However, communal and peri-urban cattle populations present unique management challenges due to shared grazing areas, multiple ownership arrangements and differing movement patterns. The new measures recognise these realities and establish practical mechanisms for quarantine management and targeted vaccination programmes tailored to local disease risks.

"This is an important step forward because our disease control framework must work for all livestock owners, not only for commercial farming operations. The realities of communal and peri-urban livestock systems require practical solutions that recognise how these production systems function," Minister Steenhuisen said.

The regulations further introduce several practical improvements designed to make disease management more efficient and proportionate.

Well-fenced farms may now manage outbreaks within affected portions of a property rather than automatically subjecting entire operations to full quarantine. Larger properties with clearly separated production units will benefit from more risk-based movement controls. Veterinary procedures for declaring herds clinically clear have been

streamlined and clarified, while farmers seeking authorisation to move products will benefit from defined response timelines and escalation mechanisms where decisions are delayed.

The measures also strengthen biosecurity requirements by focusing attention on the activities and materials that present the greatest risk of transmission, while extending precautionary controls to situations where FMD is suspected and not only where infection has already been confirmed.

Minister Steenhuisen said the measures reflect the growing partnership between government, veterinary experts and industry in the national campaign against FMD.

"These measures are the product of extensive collaboration between the Department of Agriculture, the Ministerial Task Team, the FMD Industry Coordination Council and veterinary experts from across the sector. They reflect the latest scientific evidence, recognise the realities facing farmers on the ground and provide a balanced framework that protects animal health while limiting economic disruption."

"As we continue our national campaign against Foot-and-Mouth Disease, collaboration remains our greatest strength. I want to thank all those who contributed their expertise and experience to this process. Working together, we are strengthening South Africa's biosecurity system, protecting our livestock sector and securing the future of thousands of farming businesses, workers and rural communities."

The Department will continue to review the measures as new scientific evidence emerges and will conduct a formal review within 12 months of implementation.

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