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UPDATE ON FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE IN EASTERN CAPE DECLARATION OF DISEASE MANAGEMENT AREA

The outbreaks of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) in the Kouga and Kou-kamma Municipalities of the Eastern Cape Province remain of great concern. Cattle on 26 farms have tested positive for the disease. Cattle on these positive farms have been vaccinated to decrease the viral load and to control the severity of the clinical signs seen in especially dairy cattle. Positive farms were placed under quarantine with strict movement control.

Requests were received to preventatively vaccinate dairy cattle on farms that have not been confirmed as being FMD positive but were at high risk of infection. Permission was given to preventatively vaccinate cattle on 29 farms. Animals on a further 7 farms were vaccinated after veterinary officials reported suspect clinical signs. In total, 84 655 animals were vaccinated on 62 farms.

In a further effort to prevent spreading of the disease out of the affected area, the Department of Agriculture declared a Disease Management Area (DMA) today, **Friday, the 26 July 2024**, which will include parts of the Kouga and Kou-kamma Municipalities. The boundaries of the DMA will be detailed in the related Government Gazette Notice.

The DMA will make it possible to control movements of animals out of, into and within the affected area. The main aim of the DMA is to prevent outward spread of the outbreaks, to areas not previously affected. In addition, the DMA aims to decrease further spread of the disease within the affected area, as this will decrease the viral load and infection pressure of the area.

No cloven-hoofed animals, animal products derived from cloven-hoofed animals or genetic material of cloven-hoofed animals may be moved from, to or within the Disease Management Areas of the Eastern Cape Province except under authority of a state veterinary permit contemplated in Regulation 20 (1) of the Regulations and in compliance with the conditions of



such permit.

In addition to the control measures of the Eastern Cape Province DMA, the July 2024 Gazette Notice also stipulates that cloven hooved livestock may only be moved if accompanied by a health declaration from the owner of the animals, attesting to their health at the time of moving. All cattle, sheep, and goats newly brought onto a farm must be kept separated from the resident herds for at least 28 days. This has been a requirement by law since October 2022, but the importance of this is again emphasized.

The Department of Agriculture strongly recommends to all livestock farmers in the whole country to limit animal movement as far as possible. Cloven hooved animals should not be moved unless it is necessary to allow for an opportunity to find and quarantine further undetected, affected properties to prevent any further spread of the disease. The significance of the incubation period for FMD cannot be over-emphasized. This is the period when animals appear to be healthy, in the early stages of infection (incubation period) where they are shedding virus without showing clinical signs of disease yet.

Farmers are again urged to observe biosecurity on their farms and to protect their own herds from becoming infected with disease. Section 11 of the Animal Diseases Act imposes a legal duty on any owner or manager of animals to take all reasonable steps to prevent their animals from becoming infected with any disease and to prevent the spread of any disease from their animals or land to other animals or other properties. I

FMD is a controlled animal disease in terms of the Animal Diseases Act, 1984 (Act No 35 of 1984) and the Act prescribes certain control measures, like isolation and movement control, that are being enforced by Veterinary Services.

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

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