



## MEDIA RELEASE

### Immediate release

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

Following the recent outbreaks of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) in the Kouga and Kou-Kamma Municipalities of the Eastern Cape, the Department of Agriculture is committed to providing ongoing updates and ensuring effective measures are in place to manage the situation.

#### Engagement with Farmers and Establishment of Working Groups

Minister of Agriculture Mr. John Steenhuisen is pleased to report that he has met with affected farmers to address their concerns directly. In response to these discussions, the Department, together with joint technical, communications, and operational teams, is actively addressing the issues raised. To improve cooperation between the Department, provincial authorities, and industry stakeholders, three working groups have been established. These groups facilitate effective collaboration among all parties involved in managing and resolving the outbreak.

#### Current Situation and Vaccination Efforts

The situation appears to be improving as the rate of new FMD cases have begun to decline, with the last clinical case reported in mid-July. At present, cattle on 30 farms have tested positive for the disease, these farms have been placed under quarantine, and vaccination efforts are underway to control the spread of infection and reduce the severity of clinical symptoms. Additionally, pre-emptive vaccination has been carried out on a further 37 farms identified as high-risk due to their proximity to infected areas. This measure aims to create a buffer zone around the affected farms to further limit the spread of the disease.

In total, over 92,000 cattle and nearly 600 sheep across 67 farms have been vaccinated. These efforts are a critical part of the Department's strategy to manage and eventually eradicate the disease.

#### Declaration of Disease Management Area (DMA)

To prevent the further spread of FMD, the Department of Agriculture declared a Disease Management Area (DMA) on July 19, 2024. This DMA encompasses parts of the Kouga and



Kou-Kamma Municipalities and will facilitate the regulation of animal movements into, out of, and within the affected regions. The primary objectives of the DMA are to prevent the spread of the disease to unaffected areas and to reduce viral load and infection pressure within the current outbreak zone.

The Director of Animal Health has signed and published the movement protocol for the DMA. The protocol is available on the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform, and Rural Development (DALRRD) and the Department of Rural Development and Agrarian Reform (DRDAR) websites. Copies can also be requested from AgriEC.

### **Clarification on Biosecurity and Disease Transmission**

There have been misleading claims suggesting that FMD is transmitted by birds and rodents, which undermines the importance of biosecurity measures. While theoretical transmission via such vectors exists, it is highly unlikely to contribute significantly to the current outbreak. Effective biosecurity—focused on preventing direct and indirect contact of susceptible animals and rigorous cleaning and disinfection practices—remains the most reliable method for preventing the introduction and spread of FMD on farms.

### **Movement Regulations and Biosecurity Measures**

All livestock owners, in the entire country, are reminded that health declarations are required for the movement of susceptible animals, regardless of the purpose. New arrivals of cattle, sheep, and goats must be isolated from resident herds for at least 28 days; this is in addition to urging livestock owners to only source animals from herds with a known health status. This practice, mandated by law since October 2022, is crucial for maintaining herd health and preventing disease spread.

The Department strongly advises livestock farmers nationwide to limit animal movements to the greatest extent possible. Movement of cloven-hoofed animals should be restricted to essential cases only, allowing time to identify and quarantine potentially affected properties.

### **Legal Obligations and Reporting Symptoms**

Under Section 11 of the Animal Diseases Act, it is a legal requirement for animal owners and managers to take all reasonable steps to prevent disease infection and its spread. FMD is classified as a controlled animal disease under the Animal Diseases Act, 1984 (Act No. 35 of 1984), and specific control measures, such as isolation and movement restrictions, are being enforced by Veterinary Services.

Farmers are reminded that it is a legal obligation to report any suspicious clinical symptoms—such as salivation, blisters in the mouth, limping, or hoof lesions—to the local State Veterinarian immediately. Affected animals must not be moved.

### **Trade and Export Considerations**

Trade with most partners continues under agreed risk mitigation measures. Given that dairy production is a major activity in the affected area, the Department is actively engaging with trade partners to discuss the possibility of lifting restrictions on exports of UHT milk from the DMA, as these products are considered safe.

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