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Media release

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MEDIA STATEMENT

UPDATE ON FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE OUTBREAKS IN THE EASTERN CAPE AND KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCES

The Department of Agriculture wishes to update stakeholders on the ongoing Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) outbreaks in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal provinces. While outbreaks in all other previously affected provinces have been resolved and officially closed with the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH), focused efforts are ongoing to manage and contain the disease in these two areas.

Eastern Cape Province

The FMD outbreak in the Eastern Cape, first detected in May 2024, has affected 37 farms in the Humansdorp area and one farm in East London. Additionally, 36 farms were pre-emptively vaccinated to reduce the spread of the virus and mitigate clinical symptoms. Since the outbreak began, 96,906 cattle and 635 sheep have been vaccinated.

A Disease Management Area (DMA), declared in July 2024, remains in effect. Movement of animals into, through, or out of this area is restricted and permitted only with authorisation from the State Veterinary office.

No new cases have been reported since 19 September 2024, signaling that the virus circulation is declining. Farmers in the region are reminded to strictly adhere to biosecurity measures and movement restrictions to support the containment and eradication of the disease.



Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development · Departement van Landbou, Grondhervorming en Landelike Ontwikkeling · Muhasho wa zwa Vhulimi, Mbuedzedzo ya Mavu na Mveledziso ya Mahayani, uMnyango Wezolimo, Izinguquko Kwezomhlaba Nokuthuthukiswa Kwezindawo Zasemakhaya · Ndzawulo ya Vurimi, Antswiso wa Misava na Nhluvukiso wa Matikoxikaya · Litiko Letekulima, Tingucuko Kutemhlaba Nekutfutukiswa Kwetindzawo Tasemaphandleni · UmNyango wezokuLima, ukuBuyiselwa kweNarha nokuThuthukiswa kweNdawo zemaKhaya · Kgoro ya Temo, Peakanyoleswa ya Naga le Tlhabollo ya Dinaga- magae · Lefapha la Temothuo, Kabobotjha ya Naha le Tlhabollo ya Dibaka tsa Mahae · Lefapha la Temothuo, Pusetso dinaga le Tlhabololo ya Metsemagae · ISebe lezoLimo, uBuyekezo lwemiHlaba noPhuhliso lamaPhandle



KwaZulu-Natal Province

In KwaZulu-Natal, the FMD outbreak has unfortunately extended to the uPongola Local Municipality. As a result, the boundaries of the existing DMA are under review and will be expanded to include newly affected areas and identified risk zones.

Since the outbreak began in May 2021, the KZN province has reported 155 cases as part of the SAT 2 FMD event. Of these, 17 outbreaks have been resolved and closed with the WOA. However, 133 active outbreaks remain within communal dip tanks, a few small-scale farms, and five game reserves, all located in close proximity.

Control Measures in Both Provinces

Strict movement control remains in place within the DMAs in both the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal provinces to prevent the outward spread of the disease. In KZN, the DMA established in 2021—with amended boundaries in 2022—remains active. In the Eastern Cape, the DMA declared in July 2024 continues to be enforced.

Farmers on infected or vaccinated farms must take every precaution to prevent the spread of the disease. Likewise, farmers in unaffected areas are urged to maintain strict biosecurity to prevent FMD from entering their farms or communal grazing areas. Movements of animals, vehicles, equipment, and people should be kept to a minimum and subjected to thorough cleaning and disinfection procedures.

Controlled slaughter of cattle from infected farms is permitted at designated abattoirs with additional biosecurity measures in place. Meat from restricted farms is safe for human consumption, though it cannot be exported due to certification constraints.

The Department commends the efforts of farmers, veterinarians, and other stakeholders in working to contain the disease and urges continued vigilance to protect the livestock sector.

In East London, the FMD outbreak has been successfully contained. The Department extends its gratitude to the affected farmers in the area for their vigilance and cooperation. Animals on these farms are being slaughtered in a controlled manner at designated abattoirs, ensuring that FMD risk materials are properly processed or disposed of. Only safe products are released into the local market. While meat from FMD-restricted farms cannot be exported due to certification limitations, it remains safe for human consumption.

The Director of Animal Health has designated three abattoirs to handle the slaughter of cloven-hoofed animals from FMD-quarantined farms. Seventeen farms have been granted permission for controlled slaughter at these abattoirs.

National Movement Restrictions, Legal Responsibilities, Reporting Requirements and Biosecurity Protocols

In addition to the control measures within the DMA in the Eastern Cape Province, the July 2024 Gazette Notice stipulates that cloven-hoofed livestock across South Africa may only be moved if accompanied by a health declaration from the owner, attesting to the animals' health at the time of movement. While this has been a legal requirement since October 2022, its importance is being reiterated to prevent the further spread of FMD.



The Department of Agriculture strongly advises all livestock farmers nationwide to limit animal movement as much as possible. Cloven-hoofed animals should not be moved unless absolutely necessary. Limiting movement provides an opportunity to identify and quarantine further undetected, affected properties, thus preventing any further spread of the disease. The significance of the incubation period for FMD cannot be overstated. During this period, animals may appear healthy while shedding the virus and not yet displaying clinical signs of the disease.

Farmers are again urged to observe stringent biosecurity measures on their farms to protect their herds from infection. Section 11 of the Animal Diseases Act imposes a legal duty on animal owners or managers to take all reasonable steps to prevent their animals from becoming infected and to prevent the spread of any disease from their animals or land to others.

Essential Biosecurity Measures Include:

- Any cattle, sheep, or goats newly introduced to a farm must be kept separate from resident herds for at least 28 days.
- Only introduce animals accompanied by a health declaration from known clean farms.
- Prevent nose-to-nose contact between farm animals and animals outside the farm.
- Maintain secure farm boundaries and restrict access for people and vehicles as much as possible.
- Ensure that farm personnel have no contact with animals outside the property.
- Provide clean clothing and washing facilities for all visitors and personnel, and ensure thorough cleaning and disinfection of any vehicles and farming implements brought onto a property.
- Regularly consult with the responsible private and state veterinarian and animal health technician to refine biosecurity measures.

Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) is classified as a controlled animal disease under the Animal Diseases Act, 1984 (Act No. 35 of 1984), which mandates specific control measures, such as isolation and movement restrictions, enforced by Veterinary Services.

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

For more information, contact:

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