



2026

DISEASE REPORT

MARCH

Compiled by:
DR. Danie Odendaal

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

March
2026

Although new cases of foot-and-mouth disease was still dominating in March this report will focus on the other diseases that occurred at the same time.

As in the previous month the high rainfall in the summer rainfall areas were the driving factor, with the only change that causes a slow down in seasonal disease trends was caused by the lower average temperature.

Internal parasites, especially wire worm in sheep stayed the number one problem but the cases of liver fluke were less than predicted, because less than normal transmission take place in the waterlogged areas, that is not receding like normally in the autumn. Bluetongue cases transmitted by midges were high but less than the previous year.

Large increase in blue ticks in cattle together with the diseases that is transmitted by these ticks especially Asiatic and African redwater.

The upcoming trend is cases of pneumonia especially in sheep but cases in cattle can also increase especially after weaning of the calves.



TOP 10 BEEF DISEASES

		Previous Month February 2026		Current Month March 2026	
Rank	Disease	Reports	Severity (3)	Reports	Severity (3)
1	Blue ticks	28	1.9	34	▲2.5
2	Lumpy skin disease	34	2.1	39	▲2.3
3	African redwater	28	1.9	29	▼1.6
4	Eye infections	27	1.6	23	▼1.4
5	Asiatic redwater	28	1.6	20	▼1.4
6	Anaplasmosis	23	1.6	23	▼1.2
7	Dystocia (difficult birth)	28	1.4	21	▼1.2
8	Heartwater	20	1.2	20	1.2
9	Lameness/foot problems	20	1.2	19	1.2
10	Warts	18	1.1	20	1.1

TOP 10 SHEEP DISEASES

		Previous Month February 2026		Current Month March 2026	
Rank	Disease	Reports	Severity (3)	Reports	Severity (3)
1	Wireworm	39	2.5	40	▲2.6
2	Blue tongue	23	1.4	23	▼1.2
3	Roundworms in general	21	1.2	20	1.2
4	Eye infections	9	0.7	14	▲1.1
5	Pulpy kidney	11	0.9	13	0.9
6	Lameness/foot problems	11	0.9	12	0.9
7	Coccidiosis	12	0.7	12	0.7
8	Lung infection	4	0.4	11	▲0.7
9	Tapeworm	9	0.5	11	▲0.7
10	Resistant round worms	14	1.1	9	▼0.7



March
2026

BEEF DISEASES

01 BLUE TICKS

02 LUMPY SKIN DISEASE

SHEEP DISEASES

01 WIREWORM

02 BLUE TONGUE

LUMPY SKIN DISEASE

PROVINCE	MP	Gauteng	Limpopo	NW	Free State	KZN	EC	WC	NC
Average	2.3 (8)	2.3 (3)	2.3 (3)	2.0 (4)	2.4 (11)	1.8 (5)	2.7 (3)		2.0 (2)

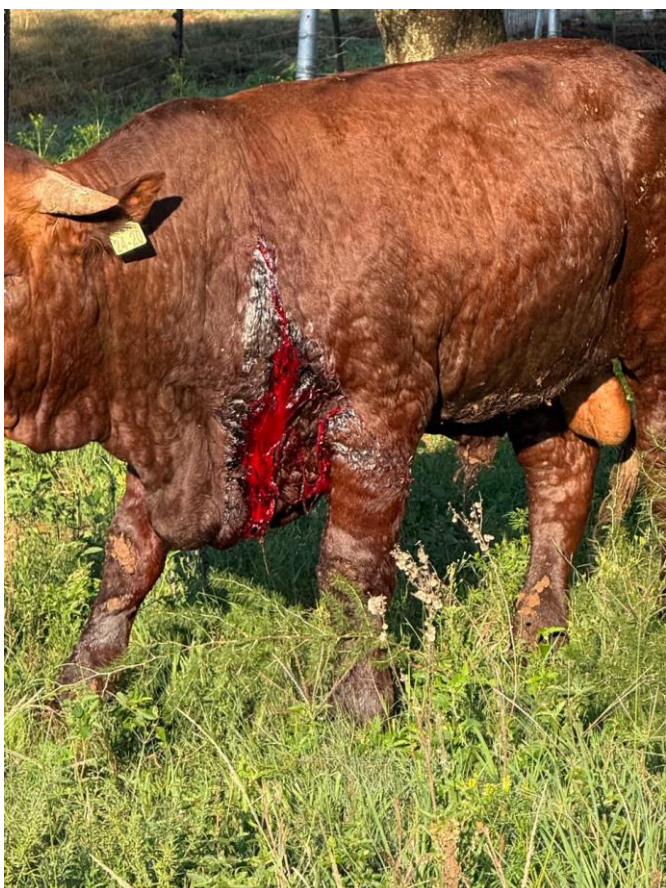
The number represent level of importance on a scale of 0–3, and the number in brackets, is the number of veterinarians that reported this disease.

The number of cases of lumpy skin disease came down slightly from last month but the severity of the disease this year is very high especially if it occur at the same time or just before or after an outbreak of foot and mouth diseases. In these cases, several cases of deaths are seen.

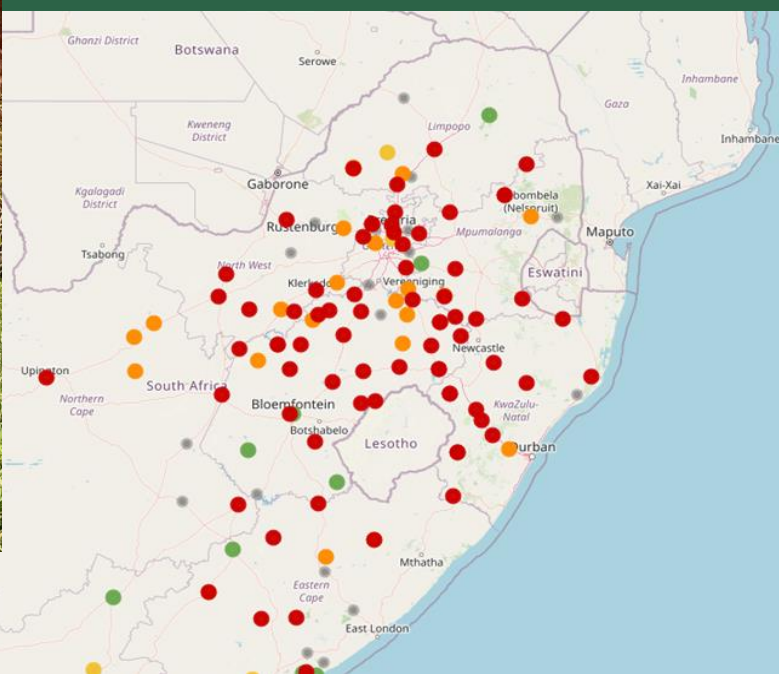
One observation is also that under this huge viral challenge there were calves under the age of six months that was severely affected by lumpy skin disease. In most cases where the correct vaccination program were followed lumpy skin did not occur but there is a few reports were vaccinated cattle got affected. Such cases must be reported to the veterinarian for follow up investigations.

FARMER ACTION

If you were affected by lumpy skin disease this year, make sure that it is the last time. Consult your veterinarian to set up the vaccination plan that will prevent this from ever happening again because this disease can effectively be prevented by the correct vaccination plan.



Severe case of lumpy skin in a bull that was also affected by foot and mouth disease – Reported by Dr Jan Bastiaan Fouche from Parys



BLUE TICKS

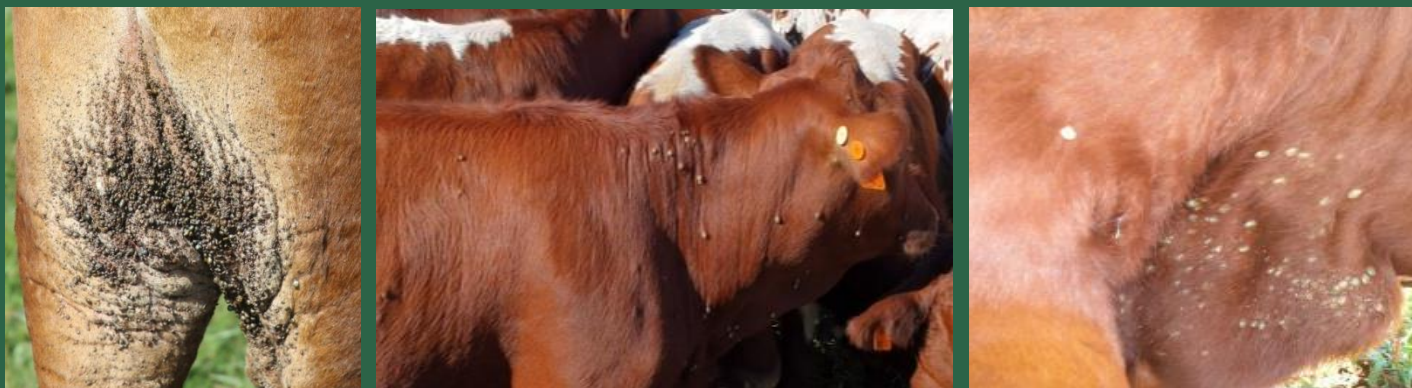
PROVINCE	MP	Gauteng	Limpopo	NW	Free State	KZN	EC	WC	NC
Average	2.4 (5)	2.5 (2)	2.0 (3)	2.7 (3)	2.5 (13)	2.8 (4)	2.3 (7)	1.8 (11)	

The number represent level of importance on a scale of 0-3, and the number in brackets, is the number of veterinarians that reported this disease.

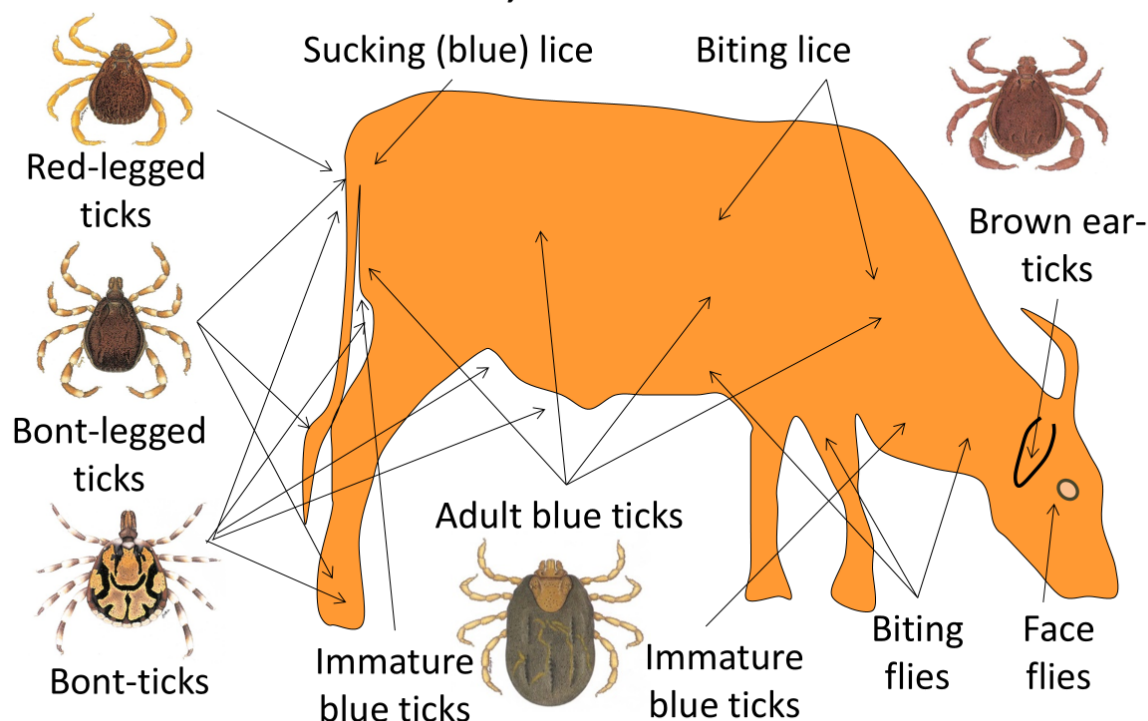
Blue ticks as a one host tick always reach peak levels in Autumn and this year the peak is later and go together with a higher transmission of Anaplasmosis, Asiatic and African redwater. This explosion in blue tick numbers can be prevented by a better tick control plan followed during the spring and summer.

FARMER ACTION

Do a weekly inspection for blue ticks, and dip on a weekly interval if needed or use long acting injectable products that are registered for blue tick control.



Where can I inspect the cattle to see the different types of ticks, lice or flies?



WIREWORM IN SHEEP

PROVINCE	MP	Gauteng	Limpopo	NW	Free State	KZN	EC	WC	NC
Average	2.4 (8)	2.0 (3)	2.0 (3)	2.3 (4)	2.5 (13)		2.5 (6)	2.5 (2)	3.0 (1)

The number represent level of importance on a scale of 0-3, and the number in brackets, is the number of veterinarians that reported this disease.

Wireworm is the internal parasite that causes most losses and deaths in sheep. It is an ongoing challenge, but it has caused severe losses during this summer, which will continue into the autumn.



Conditions for the multiplication of wireworm become less optimal under lower temperatures, but transmission still takes place because the larvae will survive on the wet grazing for another 2-3 months.

FARMER ACTION

Due to the fact that wireworm is still the number one cause of sheep deaths the farmer need to monitor the level of infestation by doing a weekly inspection of the inner eyelid (direct indication) and or worm egg counts in the dung (indirect indication).

When treatments are given the worm egg count must be repeated after 7-10 days to establish if the treatment was effective.

In the long term the sheep that get severely affected, must be identified and culled to select for more resilient sheep.

Wire worms (reddish worms which is 1-3 cm long) will be clearly visible when opening the milk stomach



FARMACHA GUIDE

Determine the level of blood loss (anaemia)



BLUE TONGUE IN SHEEP

PROVINCE	MP	Gauteng	Limpopo	NW	Free State	KZN	EC	WC	NC
Average	1.8 (5)	2.0 (1)		1.5 (2)	2.0 (11)		1.8 (4)	1.7 (3)	1.5 (2)
The number represent level of importance on a scale of 0-3, and the number in brackets, is the number of veterinarians that reported this disease.									

Although blue tongue was still ranked as the number 2 disease reported for sheep outbreaks in March, levels was still below that of the previous rainy season, due to flock immunity that developed during the severe outbreaks last year.

This year cases of blue tongue was also diagnosed in dairy cattle in KwaZulu-Natal, when blood samples were send to the laboratory in cases that show signs of 3-day stiff sickness.

FARMER ACTION

In the short term keep sheep on higher ground, while the midges are still very active during the next two months to limit disease transmission.

Due to the fact that there are no primary treatment for blue tongue it remain very important to vaccinate all replacement ewes and young rams with the live vaccine before the start of the rain season and follow adult animals yearly up with the live or inactivated vaccine.

If the inactivated vaccine is used in young animals it must be boosted within a month after the first vaccination.

FEVER + MOUTH AND FEET LESIONS



DISEASE OUTLOOK

We end off with an outlook for April

It is expected the most important disease trend that can increase during April is the cases of pneumonia that will occur. There were already increasing number of cases reported in sheep, but it can also expand to cattle especially young animals after weaning.

Preventive vaccination must be done before weaning with a broad spectrum vaccine, that include the relevant clostridial diseases as well as *Pasteurella leucotoxin*. The primary vaccination must be boosted at least 2 weeks before weaning for optimal protection during and the month after weaning when the calves or lambs are very stressed due to the weaning process.

Do not start the above mentioned vaccines at weaning, because the stress of weaning will prevent the development of good immunity and diseases like pneumonia will not be effectively prevented.

The level of most insect transmittable diseases will start to decrease.

Blue tick numbers can still stay high with high levels of tick borne diseases like redwater and anaplasmosis.

As explained before wire worm infestations will also stay high because of the larvae that will still survive on the wet grass even in the lower temperatures.