2026

DISEASE REPORT

April

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RMIS
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PLANNED HERD HEALTH & PRODUCTION
Veterinarian Network
Veearts Netwerk
BEPLANDE KUDDE GESONDHEID & PRODUKSIE

EXECUTIVE

SUMMARY

April 2026

During April, foot-and-mouth disease still dominated disease discussions, but several other important seasonal disease trends also increased.

The continued wet conditions across many parts of the country, followed by colder winter-like temperatures, created favourable conditions for both parasite-related and respiratory disease challenges.

In sheep, wireworm remained the number one disease problem, while increasing cases of pulpy kidney and lameness/foot problems were also reported. The combination of lush grazing conditions, high parasite burdens and deworming of affected sheep likely contributed to this increase in cases during April.

In cattle, blue tick numbers remained unusually high late into the season, together with the associated cases of tick-borne diseases such as Asiatic redwater, African redwater and anaplasmosis.

Pneumonia cases have started increasing, particularly in sheep, and this trend is expected to continue during the colder winter months ahead.

TOP 10
BEEF DISEASES

		Previous Month March 2026		Current Month April 2026	
Rank	Disease	Reports	Severity (3)	Reports	Severity (3)
1	Blue ticks	35	2.4	38	▲2.5
2	Lameness/foot problems	20	2.4	25	2.4
3	Asiatic redwater	25	2.0	27	▲2.1
4	Warts	21	1.6	22	▲2.1
5	Lumpy skin disease	41	2.2	36	▼2.1
6	Anaplasmosis	23	1.8	21	▲2.0
7	Abscesses	17	1.7	18	▲1.9
8	African redwater	31	2.0	31	▼1.9
9	Dystocia (difficult birth)	23	1.9	26	▼1.8
10	Three-day stiff-sickness	19	1.9	22	▼1.7

TOP 10
SHEEP DISEASES

		Previous Month March 2026		Current Month April 2026	
Rank	Disease	Reports	Severity (3)	Reports	Severity (3)
1	Lameness/foot problems	12	2.1	20	▲2.6
2	Wireworm	44	2.4	34	▲2.5
3	Tapeworm	12	1.8	10	▲2.4
4	Roundworms in general	21	2.2	23	▲2.3
5	Blue tongue	25	1.8	17	▲2.2
6	Resistant round worms	9	2.3	12	▼2.2
7	Abscesses	6	1.8	10	▲2.0
8	Orf	7	2.0	11	2.0
9	Lung infection	11	2.1	11	▼1.8
10	Pulpy kidney	13	2.0	14	▼1.7

April
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BEEF DISEASES

01 BLUE TICKS & TICK-BORNE DISEASES

02 ASIATIC REDWATER

SHEEP DISEASES

01 PULPY KIDNEY

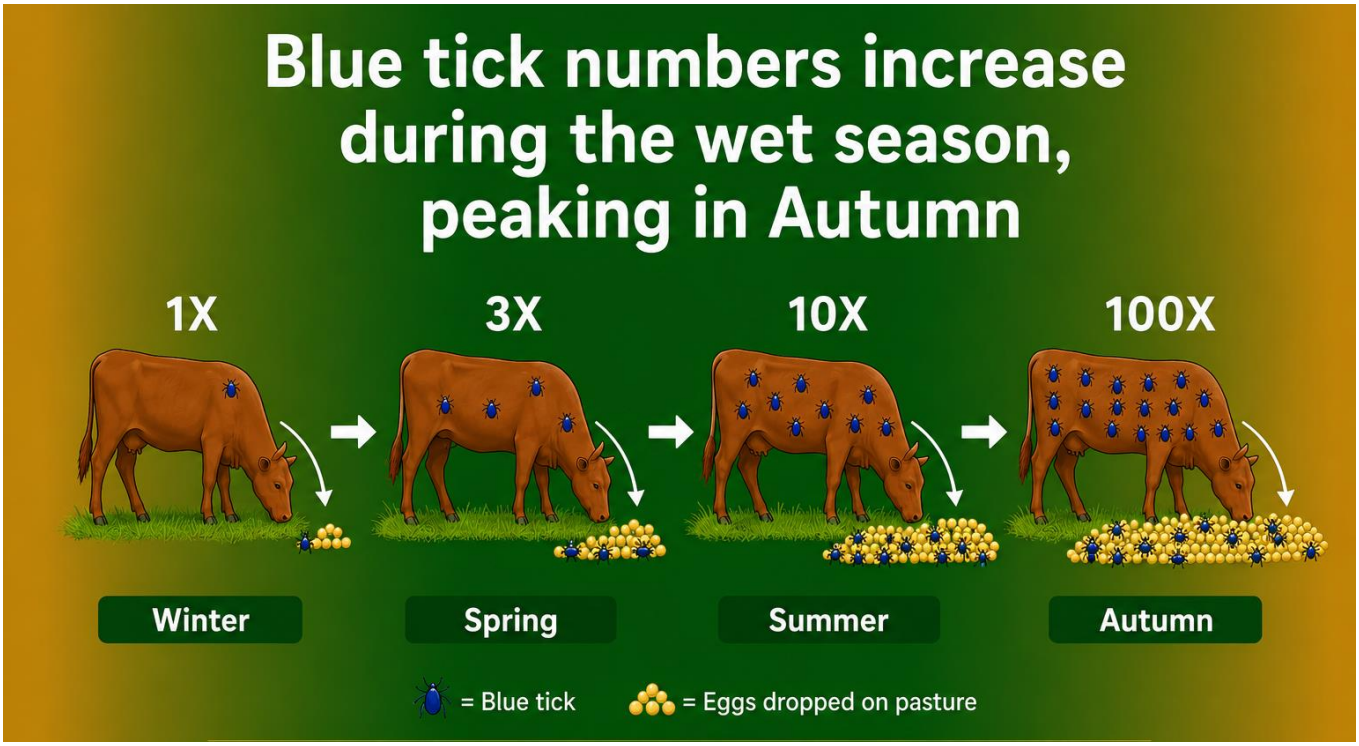
02 LAMENESS& FOOT PROBLEMS

BLUE TICKS & TICK-BORNE DISEASES

	MP	Gauteng	Limpopo	NW	Free State	KZN	EC	WC	NC
Beef	2.6 (8)	2.5 (4)	2.0 (2)	3.0 (2)	2.5 (11)	2.8 (4)	2.5 (4)	1.5 (2)	1.0 (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.

Due to the fact that blue ticks complete their whole life cycle on one animal, it can produce a number of generations per year, and the number of ticks in each generation is higher with peak numbers in autumn.



FARMER ACTION

If an effective treatment with an appropriate dipping compound is done against blue ticks, the farmer can expect to only see adult engorged female blue ticks on the cattle again 3 to 4 weeks after treatment.

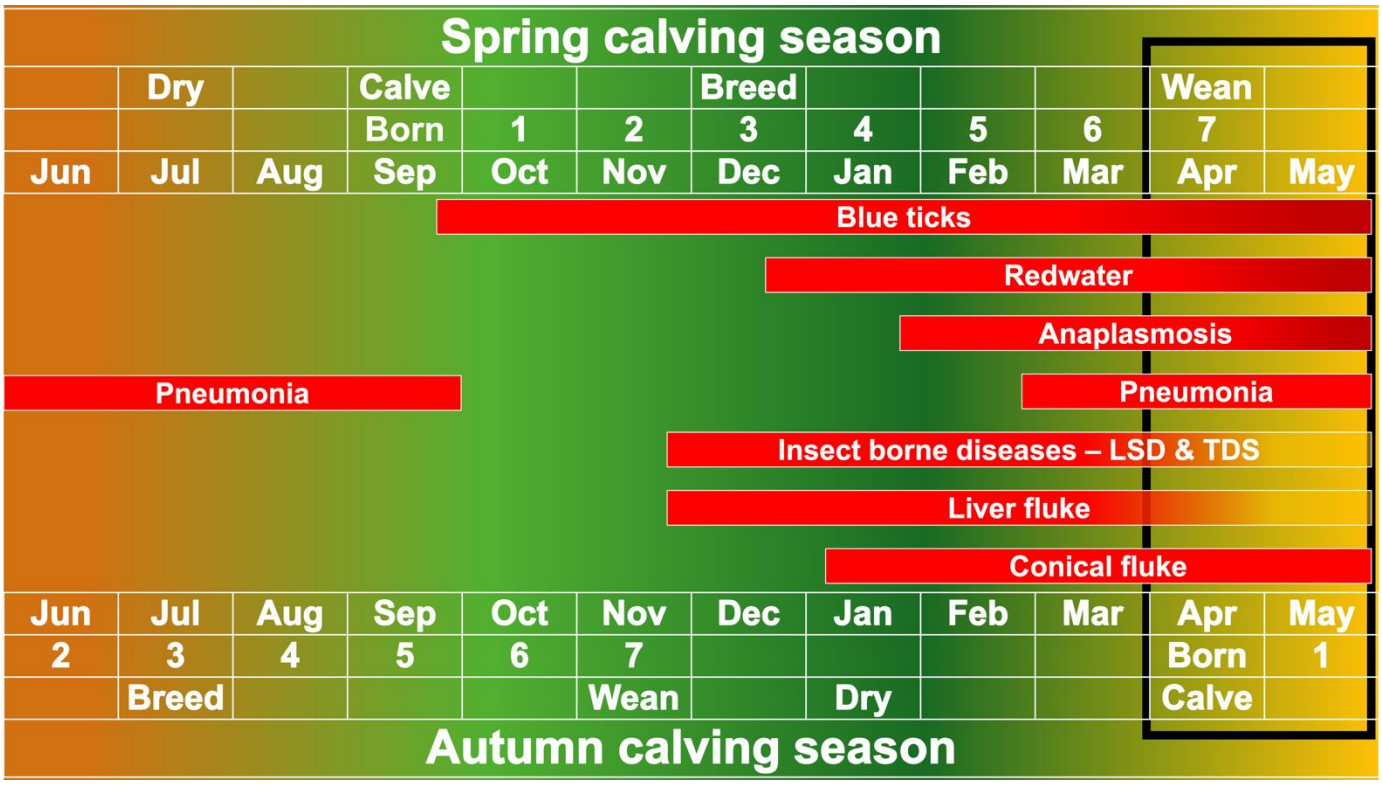
If the treatment was not successful, mostly due to resistance against the dipping compound, adult engorged female blue ticks will be seen within a week after treatment. In such cases the farmer needs to consult their veterinarian to discuss alternative dipping compounds that belong to a different active group and/or using injectable longer-acting products to get over the explosion in the blue tick population until the cold winter temperatures kick in and reduce the number of active blue ticks.

Remember that adult engorged female blue ticks will fall off and produce eggs that will survive during the winter to form the next generation during the following spring.

TICK-BORNE DISEASES

The high blue tick populations resulted in increased reports of tick-borne diseases, especially Asiatic redwater, African redwater and anaplasmosis.

The larval stage of the blue tick plays a particularly important role in the transmission of Asiatic redwater. These larvae are extremely small and often not visible to producers, making disease control very difficult once tick populations become established.



ASIATIC REDWATER

	MP	Gauteng	Limpopo	NW	Free State	KZN	EC	WC	NC
Beef	2.1 (9)	2.0 (1)	2.0 (1)		2.1 (7)	2.0 (3)	2.7 (3)	1.3 (3)	

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.

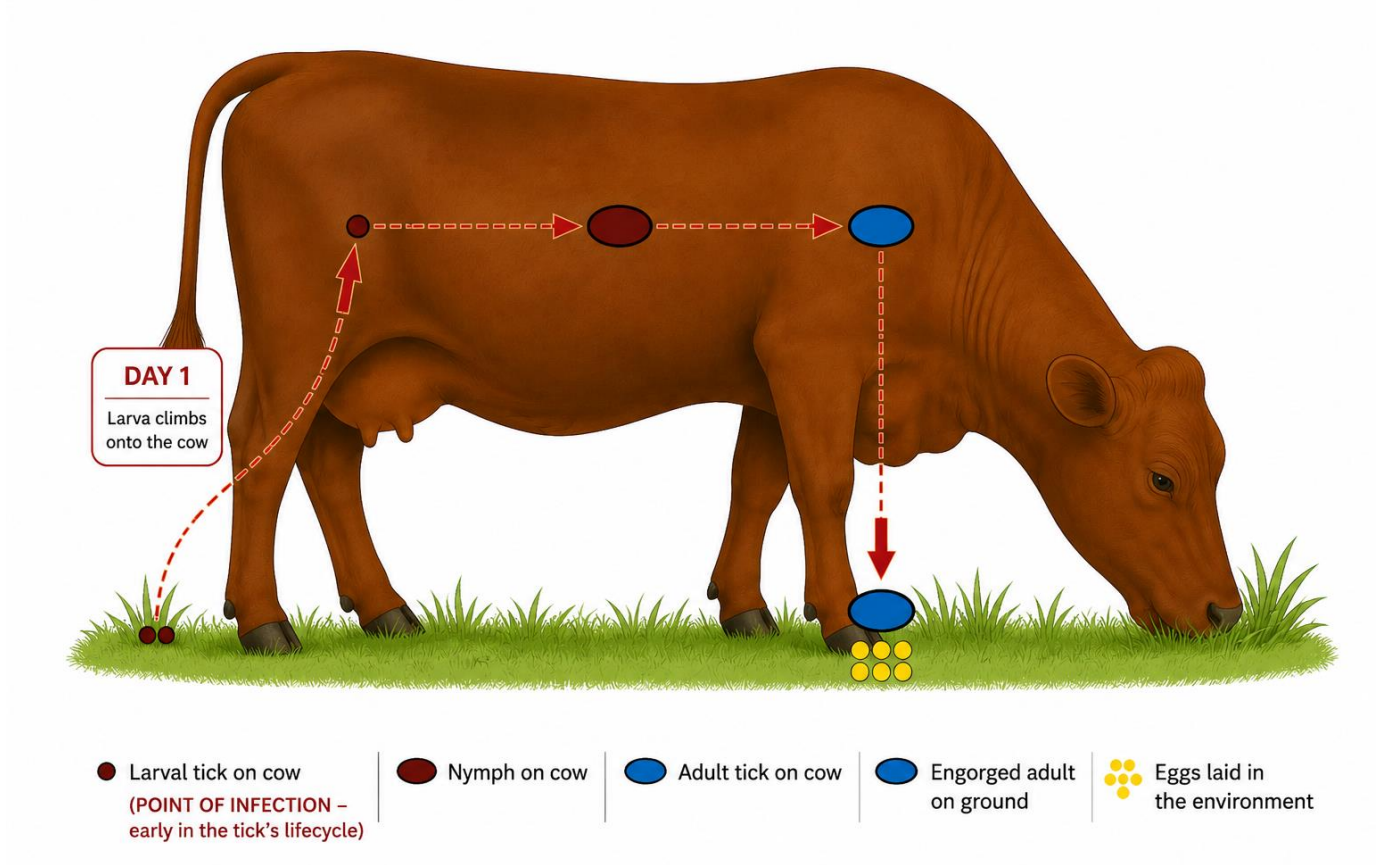
Asiatic redwater has been identified as the highest priority disease in both dairy and beef cattle causing the most deaths.

It is an unresolved problem due to the fact that the blood vaccine is not available on a regular basis, it is a difficult vaccine to use and the instability of the disease regarding the development of herd immunity in most areas.

The reasons are explained shortly below by illustration of the disease transmission process to susceptible cattle.

Note:

- This disease is only transmitted by the small larvae of the pantropic blue tick.
- These larvae can transmit the disease from day one after attachment, when the larvae start to suck blood.
- In practical terms, this means these ticks can start to transmit the disease one week after dipping.
- The period over which the parasites develop in the red blood cells of cattle lasts for one to two weeks before the first signs of disease can be observed, but thereafter symptoms develop rapidly until death.



PULPY KIDNEY

	MP	Gauteng	Limpopo	NW	Free State	KZN	EC	WC	NC
Sheep	**1.8 (4)**	**2.0 (1)**	**1.0 (1)**	**1.5 (2)**	**1.8 (4)**			**2.0 (1)**	**2.0 (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.

An unusually high number of pulpy kidney cases in sheep were reported during April. Pulpy kidney is commonly associated with sudden nutritional changes, especially where sheep move rapidly from poor grazing conditions onto lush green pasture. Increased deworming of heavily parasitised sheep may also contribute to the development of the disease under current conditions. The organisms responsible for pulpy kidney are normally present in the intestinal tract. When they multiply rapidly, toxins are produced and absorbed into the bloodstream, damaging vital organs such as the kidneys, liver, brain and lungs.

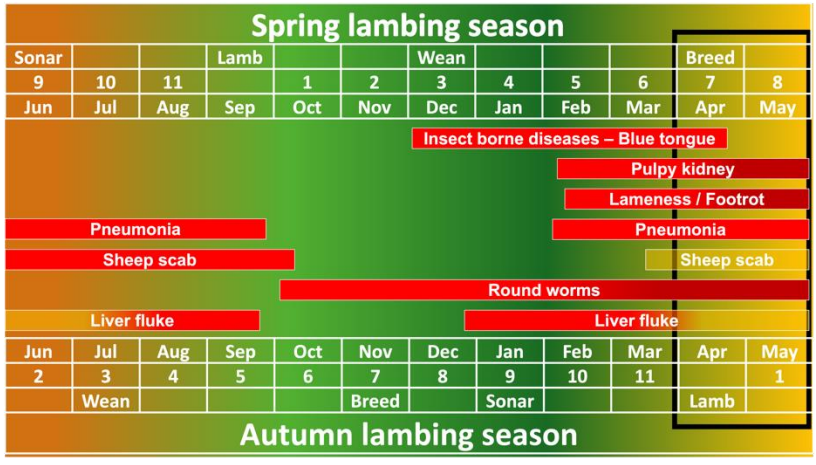
Once clinical signs develop, treatment is seldom effective and sudden deaths commonly occur.

The increase in cases during April again highlights the importance of adapting vaccination programmes to changing seasonal conditions and disease risks.

FARMER ACTION

Consult your veterinarian regarding the timing of pulpy kidney vaccinations, especially during periods of prolonged rainfall, lush grazing conditions and high parasite burdens.

Vaccination remains the only effective preventative measure, and under higher-risk conditions booster vaccinations may be needed more frequently than under extensive grazing systems.



LAMENESS & FOOT PROBLEMS

PROVINCE	MP	Gauteng	Limpopo	NW	Free State	KZN	EC	WC	NC
Average	2.3 (7)	2.3 (4)	2.4 (7)	2.3 (6)	2.5 (19)	3.0 (3)	2.5 (4)	2.0 (5)	1.0 (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.

Reports of lameness and foot problems in sheep also increased during April due to the continued wet conditions experienced across many grazing areas.

Not all cases of lameness are true contagious footrot. In many cases prolonged wet conditions soften the skin and hoof tissue, allowing environmental bacteria to invade and cause interdigital infections and inflammation. However, true footrot caused by specific contagious organisms can also occur and should be properly diagnosed.

Tick-related lameness was also reported in some drier regions where tick activity remained high later into the season than normally expected.

FARMER ACTION

Inspect sheep regularly for early signs of lameness and separate severely affected animals where possible.

Consult your veterinarian to determine the underlying cause of the problem and develop an appropriate treatment and prevention programme, as management differs significantly between environmental foot infections, contagious footrot and tick-associated lameness.

DISEASE OUTLOOK

We end off with an outlook for May 2026.

Pneumonia cases are expected to increase further during the colder winter conditions, particularly in sheep but also in calves after weaning. Where sheep are exposed to cold, wet and windy weather, some form of protection should be provided such as a straw bale wall.

There are two important approaches to pneumonia control. The first is early identification and rapid treatment using the correct antibiotic protocol developed together with the veterinarian. The second is preventative vaccination against the important Pasteurella and Mannheimia organisms involved in respiratory disease outbreaks.

Blue tick numbers and associated tick-borne diseases may remain high in some areas despite the colder weather, especially where wet conditions continue.

Wireworm burdens in sheep are also expected to remain significant for the next few months due to continued survival of larvae on wet grazing.

Farmers are encouraged to work closely with their veterinarians to continuously adapt vaccination, parasite control and disease management programmes according to changing seasonal conditions and local disease risks.