



2026

DISEASE REPORT

July

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

July
2026

For the first time in months foot-and-mouth-disease is not the main problem reported by veterinarians regarding cattle. With the availability of vaccines that can be privately acquired from later in August through private veterinarians on the RMIS ordering system, farmers will also have the opportunity to protect their own herds if they were not vaccinated by the state veterinary services before.

In beef cattle we are now at the start of the main calving season and reports regarding calving and problems like difficult calvings and prolapses do dominate the reporting by veterinarians who are very involved in providing a support service.

Blue tick numbers remained unexpectedly high even now in July which is a specific trend that will need specific management during the spring in order to break the live cycle of these ticks.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – **CONTINUED**

Pneumonia cases reported during July were lower than expected due to the winter that was milder than expected, except for severe cold fronts that swept over the country but most of them only lasted for 3 to maximum 5 days. In most areas the total number of days with frost was less than normal. The involvement of the veterinarian is very important in the choice of vaccine to prevent or antibiotic to treat effectively.

In sheep, internal parasites and specifically wire worm remained the leading disease problem, even in July which is a very abnormal trend, and possible resistance of these parasites against deworming remedies must be investigated.

More integrated parasite management, in consultation with the flock veterinarian will be needed on sheep farms where wireworm became the first limiting factor to sustainable production.



TOP 10 BEEF DISEASES

		Previous Month June 2026		Current Month July 2026	
Rank	Disease	Reports	Severity (3)	Reports	Severity (3)
1	Blue ticks	35	2,3	27	▼2.2
2	Foot-and-mouth disease	35	2,3	24	▼2.1
3	Lung infection	24	2,2	20	▼2.1
4	Lumpy skin disease	20	2,2	17	▼1.8
5	Ringworm	18	2,0	17	▼1.9
6	Dystocia (difficult birth)	19	1,7	39	▲1.8
7	Cervical prolapse	18	1,5	25	▲1,6
8	Abortions	-	-	21	1.8
9	Uterus prolapse	-	-	18	1.4
10	Blackquarter	-	-	17	1.8

TOP 10 SHEEP DISEASES

		Previous Month June 2026		Current Month July 2026	
Rank	Disease	Reports	Severity (3)	Reports	Severity (3)
1	Lameness/foot problems	9	2,2	11	▲2,7
2	Diarrhoea	-	-	9	2.4
3	Roundworms in general	17	2,5	17	▼2.2
4	Orf	9	2,2	10	2.2
5	Lung infection	15	1,9	12	▲2,2
6	Resistant round worms	9	2,6	11	▼2.0
7	Acidosis	-	-	9	2.0
8	Wireworm	34	2,2	24	▼1.9
9	Coccidiosis	13	2,3	15	▼1.7
10	Dystocia (difficult birth)	-	-	14	1.5

July
2026

BEEF DISEASES

01 BLUE TICKS

02 DIFFICULT CALVINGS

SHEEP DISEASES

01 WIREWORM

02 LUNG INFECTION (PNEUMONIA)

BLUE TICKS

A very abnormal trend developed during the last two months with the high numbers of adult blue ticks that were still reported in the middle of the winter.

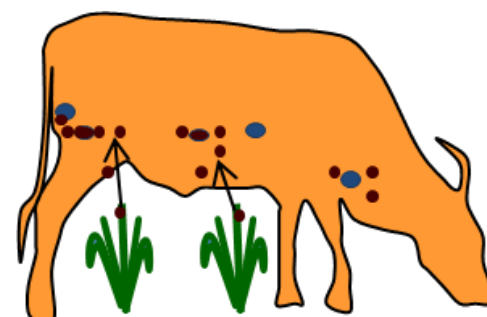
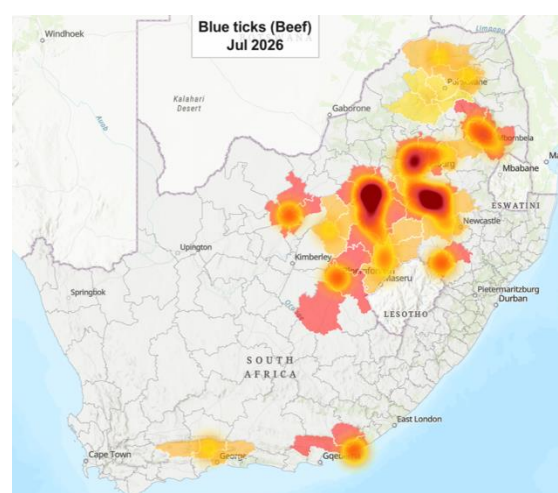
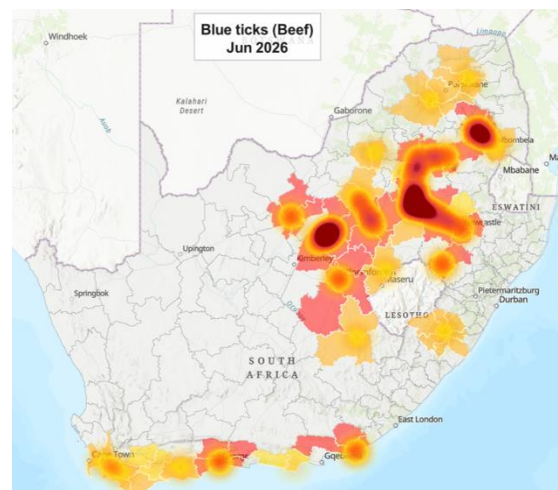
As discussed before, very few blue ticks are normally seen on the cattle during the winter, and this observation prove that the number of consecutive cold or days with frost were less than normal, thus an indication of a warmer winter. It will lead to higher number of blue ticks surviving through the winter and an expected higher start of blue ticks infestations than would be normally expected in the spring.

FARMER ACTION

1. In affected areas a very intensive blue tick control program will have to be followed in order to break the life cycle of these ticks at the first generation of ticks at the beginning of the next rain season otherwise a even higher explosion in blue tick numbers can be expected during the following summer and autumn.
2. Also the efficacy of the different dipping compounds must be assessed at the end of winter/start of spring. This must be done at the start of the rain season in order to know which dipping compounds are still working on the farm.

HOW TO EVALUATE THE EFFICACY OF A TICK CONTROL PRODUCT.

- Dip or treat the animal with high numbers of visible blue ticks on them and inspect them one week later.
- If there are any engorged female blue ticks on them the treatment was not effective.
- In case of blue tick resistance consult with your veterinarian about the use of a dip from an alternative dipping group or the strategic use of injectable blue tick control products.

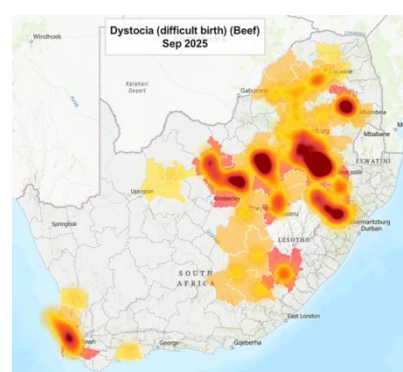
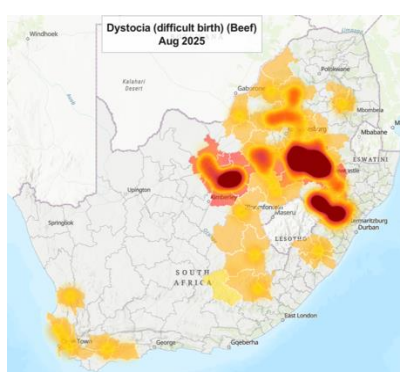
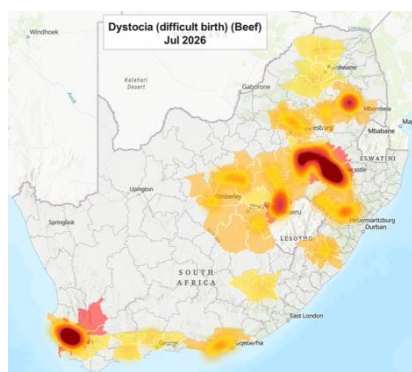


DIFFICULT CALVINGS

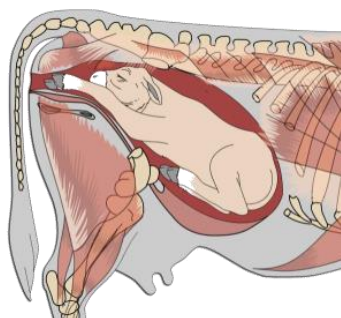
We are now entering the beginning of the spring calving season. The map below (July 2026) already shows that a high number of difficult births can be expected, due to the good to very good availability of grazing during the period when these cows were pregnant. Most of these cows will now be calving over the next few months, through to December.

Below are also maps showing difficult births in cattle that were reported during August and September last year (2025). This provides a very clear indication that veterinary assistance during the main calving season is one of the services for which veterinarians are most frequently used. Difficult births are also one of the most important causes of calf deaths during the calving season.

This report provides a short summary of practical measures that can improve the approach to early intervention and, ultimately, increase calf survival.



Phase 1



6 hours

>6 hours

At the beginning of Phase 1 the internal contractions of the uterus starts.

The calf is now positioning itself and moving into the birth canal as seen in the picture.

These internal contractions give rise to the following visible signs:

The cow becomes uneasy, lies down and gets up again a number of times, kicks at the belly and starts nesting behaviour which means that she is looking for a place to calve which is usually a bit away from other cows.

When the herdsman observes the first signs of the beginning of Phase 1 the time must be recorded in Calving Observation Record.

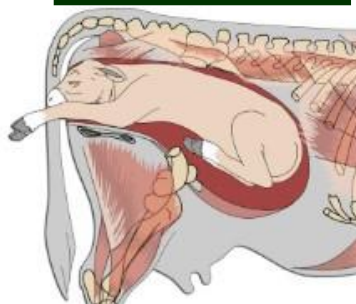
The cow is now on the clock and calving must be finished during the herdsman's current shift or during the next shift after the handover to the next on duty herdsman.

If the cow has contractions for more than 6 hours without observing the breaking of the water. Some abnormality is preventing Phase 1 of the birth process to progress to Phase 2.

The Foreman and Operations Manager must be informed.

DIFFICULT CALVINGS – CONTINUED

Phase 2



The second Phase of calving starts when the water sack appears and breaks and the calf is actively pushed out by visible contraction of the abdomen.

In normal calving, the front hooves and then half of the front legs and the nose of the calf will become visible soon after the water breaks and the cow starts to push actively.

Normal calving will be finished within two hours, after the water broke or the hooves became visible



1 hour

When the herdsman observes the first signs of the beginning of Phase 2, the time must also be recorded in Calving Observation Record.

The cow is now on the advanced clock and calving will normally be finished during the herdsman's current shift.

>1 hour

If the hooves become visible but there is no progress or the cow stops pushing there is a problem preventing the normal calving, within one hour maximum.

**The Foreman and Operations Manager must be informed.
The cow can slowly be moved closer to the crush.**

EXAMINATION AND METHOD TO ESTABLISH ABNORMAL PRESENTATION OR POSITIONING.

Assessing the situation when Phase 1 has started but there is no progress after 6 hours or when Phase 2 has started, but there is no progress after 1 hour. The approach must be that a trained/skilled examiner (herdsman/manager) must be called in, to assess the presentation and positioning of the calf (this first line function can be delegated to the herdsman after infield training and evaluation of competency).

The cow must be placed in the crush pen. The tail must be lifted and the area under the tail must be washed with the disinfecting soap solution and then be rinsed with clean water. The examiner must use long arm length plastic gloves that is well lubricated to feel and assess the positioning and presentation of the calf. The person conducting the examination must ensure that his fingernails are cut short and clean to prevent any internal injury to the animal under examination.

If the person assisting has examined the cow but lacks the necessary skill to correct the most basic presentation or positioning faults or provide effective aid, it is always advisable to call in the herd veterinarian at an early stage. The herd veterinarian possesses the equipment and expertise to provide professional assistance with difficult calvings, including cases that may require a Caesarean section.

THE BASIC RULE:

If the person assisting is unable to position the calf correctly or extract it within 30 minutes, the herd veterinarian should be called in. Any further struggling will only risk injury to the calf or the cow and will also reduce the veterinarian's chances of delivering a live calf.

The full description document, regarding early assistance with difficult calvings, is available on request.

WIREWORM

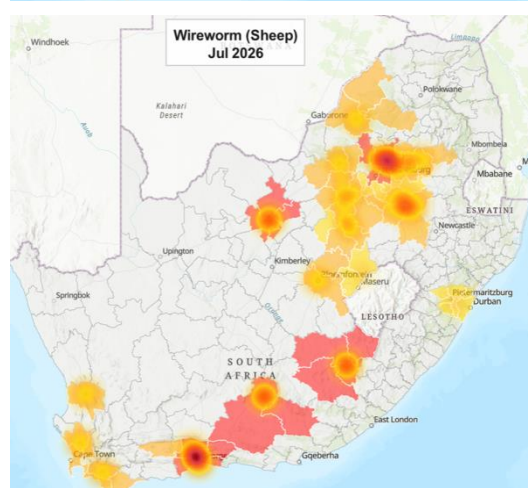
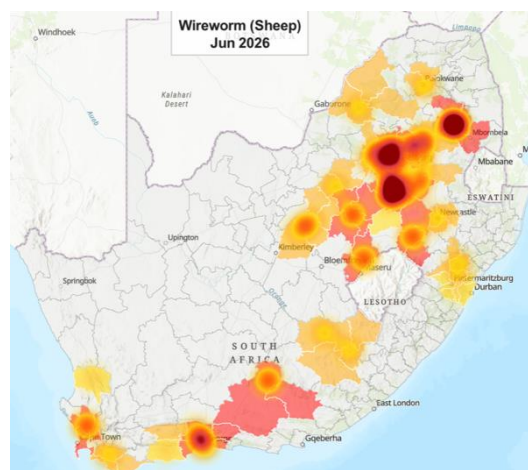
	MP	Gauteng	Limpopo	NW	Free State	KZN	EC	WC	NC
AVERAGE	2.0 (3)	1.9 (7)	2.0 (2)	2.4 (5)	1.5 (8)	1.5 (2)	3.0 (3)	2.2 (6)	
The number represent level of importance on a scale of 0–3, and the number in brackets, is the number of veterinarians that reported this disease.									

Wireworm in sheep persisted to be a problem right into the winter months. This is a abnormal trend but can be due to the warmer winter or more resistance developing against the current treatments available.

FARMER ACTION

If a farmer experience serious problems with the efficacy of deworming remedies a faecal egg count reduction test (FECRT) is the only practical field method to determine whether a deworming product is still effective against gastrointestinal nematodes in sheep on that farm.

This test can be done using only the current product used but it is better to do the test for all available product (chemical) groups like the Benzimidazole, Levamisole, Macrocyclic lactone, Closantel / Rafoxanide, Organophosphates and newer groups like Monepantel.



SIMPLE METHODOLOGY

1. Select the sheep

- For each product that must tested select a group of at least 10 sheep, preferably with a reasonably high faecal egg count.
- Avoid animals recently treated with a dewormer.
- Ideally use sheep from the same flock, grazing the same pasture.

2. Take a pre-treatment faecal sample

- Collect individual faecal samples directly from the rectum from every selected sheep.
- Identify each sheep individually.
- Send samples to a veterinarian/laboratory for quantitative faecal egg counts, normally reported as eggs per gram (EPG).
- Ideally, the average pre-treatment count should be sufficiently high to allow a meaningful comparison.

WIREWORM – CONTINUED

3. Administer the dewormer

- Treat each sheep with the correct recommended dose, based on the heaviest animal or an accurate individual body weight.
- Record the product, active ingredient, dose and date.
- Make sure the product is administered correctly.

4. Wait for the appropriate interval

- Collect another individual faecal sample approximately 14 days after treatment for most conventional wormers.
- The exact interval can vary according to the drug class and local protocol.

5. Do the second faecal egg count

- Collect another individual faecal sample approximately 14 days after treatment for most conventional wormers.
- The exact interval can vary according to the drug class and local protocol.

6. Calculate the reduction

A simple calculation is:

$$\text{FECR (\%)} = [(\text{Mean pre-treatment EPG} - \text{Mean post-treatment EPG}) \div \text{Mean pre-treatment EPG}] \times 100$$

For example:

- Before treatment: average = 1,000 EPG
- 14 days after treatment: average = 200 EPG

Reduction = 80%

This test must be done in consultation with the flock veterinarian that will then prescribe a plan regarding the management and treatments needed during the year for:

1. the different age groups,
2. at the different stages of the production cycle and
3. for the different seasons.

LUNG INFECTIONS

PROVINCE	MP	Gauteng	Limpopo	NW	Free State	KZN	EC	WC	NC
AVERAGE	2.0 (6)	1.7 (7)	2.0 (1)	3.0 (2)	1.7 (7)	2.0 (1)	2.3 (3)	1.3 (3)	
BEEF	1.5 (4)	1.5 (2)		3.0 (1)	1.6 (5)	2.0 (1)	2.0 (1)	2.0 (1)	
DAIRY							2.0 (1)	1.0 (1)	
SHEEP	3.0 (1)	2.0 (1)		3.0 (1)	2.0 (2)		3.0 (1)	1.0 (1)	
GOAT	3.0 (1)	1.8 (4)	2.0 (1)						

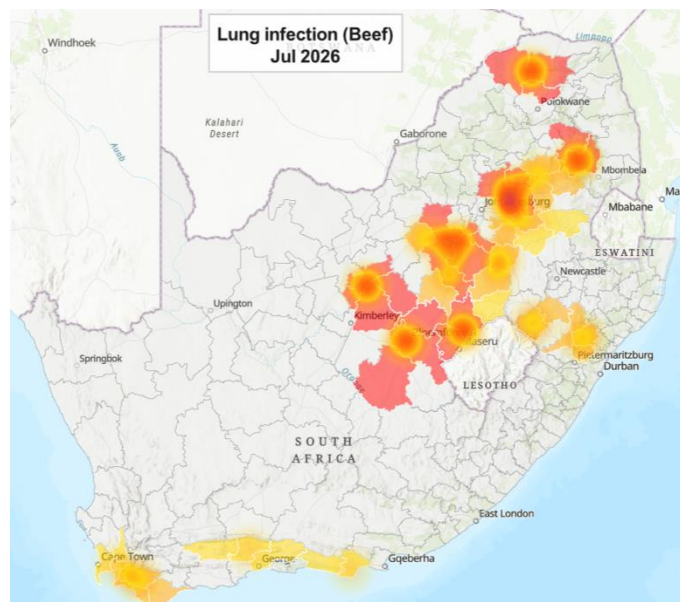
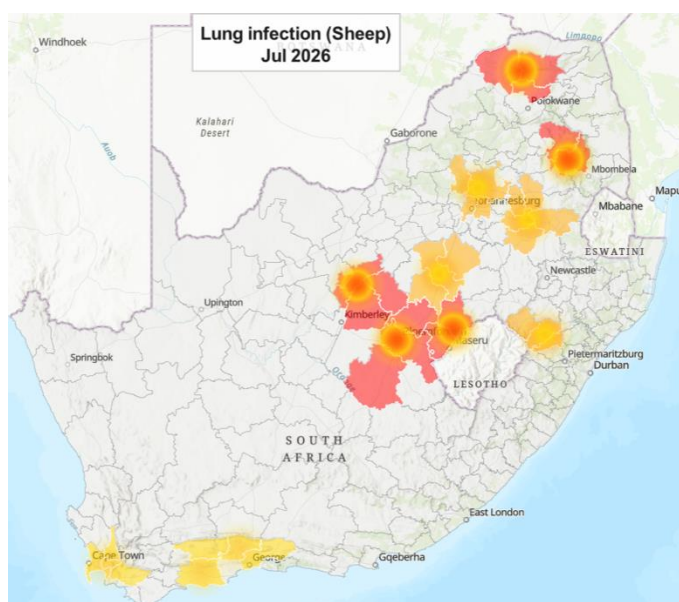
The number represent level of importance on a scale of 0-3, and the number in brackets, is the number of veterinarians that reported this disease.

Lung infections during July 2026 in sheep as well as cattle was lower than expected at the beginning of the winter, due to the higher than normal average temperature during the winter in many areas in the country. Lung infection (pneumonia) is a multi-factorial disease with a number of disease causing organisms that can cause the disease. These organisms (viruses and bacteria) differ also from cattle to sheep.

FARMER ACTION:

If pneumonia is a common cause of disease or deaths on your farm please consult with the veterinarian that deals with many of these cases in a specific area.

It is not always cost-effective to send samples to the laboratory for identification of the specific organism, but because veterinarians are dealing with many cases they will send some samples away and can advise on best vaccine to use and/or to provide the correct antibiotic treatment protocol.



DISEASE OUTLOOK

We end off with an outlook for August 2026.

Although it was in general a milder winter, severe cold fronts can still be expected during August. That can place severe stress on animals in open fields where there are no protection from the cold wind. Due to the fact that there can be large changes in temperature more cases of pneumonia can be expected as well as animals dying to to extreme cold exposure.

Farmers must react on weather predictions and ensure that animals are moved to camps where there are some protection from the wind.

The planning for early parasite control at the start of the spring must get immediate attention and the testing of products used for control must also be done.

Producers are encouraged to continue working closely with their veterinarians on both disease reporting and structured vaccination planning.

Ongoing research continues to demonstrate that annual vaccination programmes, combined with regular disease monitoring, provide the most effective approach to long-term disease prevention.

I would urge farmers to participate in the research project regarding planned disease prevention through vaccination.

This baseline research will give me the correct information in developing a National Disease Prevention Strategy by end of October, that will be shared by the RMIS with livestock veterinarians and farmers.

The Questionnaire can be obtained from your veterinarian and from the RMIS website.