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MEC SITHOLE-MOLOI VISITS KWAHLABISA TO ROLL OUT THE VACCINATION CAMPAIGN TO CURB THE SPREAD OF FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE

The movement of livestock in Mkhanyakude, Zululand and King Cetshwayo will be prohibited for 5 years in efforts to curb the spread of Foot and Mouth Disease in the affected areas.

This transpired during a visit by the KZN MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development, Mrs Bongwiwe Sithole-Moloi, at a vaccination site at Ebukhipha Dip Tank near KwaHlabisa.

Sithole-Moloi said as government, they will conduct random roadblocks in all the affected areas to ensure that communities comply with the movement prohibition. She expressed an acute concern about the persistent movement of livestock in KwaHlabisa even after the prohibition was announced.

“We are pleading with the farmers and cattle owners to refrain from transporting cattle for whatever occasion because this leads to the spread of the disease. We also urge people to stop moving livestock at night,” she said.

She also called upon the law enforcement agencies to aid in the campaign to quell the spread of foot and mouth disease by actively ensuring compliance with the movement ban.

Sithole-Moloi said as government they understand the impact the ban will have on the livelihoods of stock owners but insisted that curbing the spread should take priority.

More than 1600 cattle were earmarked for vaccination with half of this getting the vaccination yesterday.

Sithole-Moloi decried the stock theft which is apparently prevalent in the area saying it frustrates the efforts to stop the spread of the disease.

The customary payment of lobola using livestock during marriage negotiations is also responsible in spreading the disease to other areas, she said.

Bongani Gina, a local stock owner, said the vaccination of livestock has brought the all-needed support to the rural communities.

“The action taken by the government is most welcome. We have been very worried about this disease and the roll-out of vaccination will assist us a great deal,” said Gina.

He said the response by the livestock farmers to a call by the local veterinarians, who alerted the farmers about the disease, should be applauded.

Mr Bhekisana Mbatha, Chairperson of uMkhanyakude District Livestock Association, said the vaccination will stop the spread and rescue the local economy because the livestock movement ban affects the owners who depend on the proceeds of sales for subsistence.

He said that stock theft should be combated head-on by the law enforcement agencies to ensure that it doesn't derail the government's efforts.

The campaign will be rolled out to other areas that are at a high risk of infection.

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