



KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE

AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MEDIA STATEMENT

07 MARCH 2025

THE STATUS OF FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE IN KWAZULU-NATAL FOLLOWING A POSITIVE CASE IN AMAJUBA DISTRICT

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Agriculture and Rural Development confirms positive cases of Foot-and-Mouth Disease in Newcastle, under Amajuba District. The existing Disease Management Area boundaries, currently encompassing uMkhanyakude, King Cetshwayo, and Zululand districts, are likely to be reviewed in line with the new outbreak. FMD is classified as a controlled animal disease under the Animal Diseases Act, 1984 (Act No. 35 of 1984).

Any suspicious clinical symptoms, including excessive salivation, blisters in the mouth, limping, or hoof lesions, must be reported immediately to the local State Veterinary Services. Following the detection of a suspected case in Amajuba District on 10 February 2025, laboratory results confirmed the presence of FMD virus infection in the tissue and blood samples of cattle.

This was reported to our Newcastle office, detailing a case of cattle limping and weight loss. Upon investigation, lesions between the hooves and excessive salivation were observed in two out of five cattle. Blood and tissue samples were collected, and the results tested positive for FMD virus. The report indicated that there was an introduction of cattle in the area in December 2024 and the purchase of three cattle at an auction sale in Utrecht/eMadlangeni, still under Amajuba District.

We have identified the affected dip tank and are vaccinating all cattle within a 20 kilometre radius and 73 dipping tanks, adhering to our animal health protocols. Vaccination efforts have also been extended to areas such as Dannhauser and eMadlangeni to prevent disease spread. The affected four dip tanks have been placed under restriction, and vaccination efforts are ongoing.

Amajuba District is the fourth district in the province to be affected by FMD, alongside uMkhanyakude, Zululand, and King Cetshwayo. The vaccination campaign, initiated yesterday on 6 March, will continue until all cattle have been vaccinated and all dip tanks have been treated. The recent outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) has necessitated the suspension of all live cattle/livestock auction sales, thereby disrupting beef sales in the Amajuba, uMzinyathi and other neighbouring districts such as uThukela and Zululand.

All movement of live livestock through, to and from Amajuba District must be done with a State Veterinary approved red cross permit to be sourced from the State Vet in charge of the area the animals are originating from. In KwaZulu-Natal, the challenge is compounded by the FMD carrier status of buffalo populations in some game reserves in close proximity to communal livestock and borderline areas.



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FMD is a cause for concern as it has a negative impact on red meat production and its export prospects. We know that countries are a bit hesitant to export live cattle and their products from a country with FMD. Foot-and-Mouth Disease also poses a significant threat to the region's meat sales. Upon my deployment as the MEC for Agriculture in June last year, we made strategic efforts to ensure that vacant posts are filled and in so doing increase the capacity of veterinary services to prevent and contain the outbreak of controlled diseases. We are urging our farmers to seek permission from veterinary services before moving animals.

Law enforcement agencies will be monitoring roads to prevent the movement of animals from infected districts to other districts. The department has developed an action plan, which includes engaging with stakeholders such as the livestock farming community, municipalities, organised agriculture, and industry role players.

CHALLENGES

1. Despite our awareness efforts and animal movement control measures in place, we still experience non-compliance by farmers/livestock owners who are illegally moving animals beyond the districts with affected animals.
2. The movement control measures are preventing farmers in Disease Management Areas from socially and economically benefiting from their cattle due to restrictions being implemented.
3. We still have poor infrastructure, including dip tanks, but it's something we are working on. To this end, we have set aside about R40 million that will go towards rebuilding and renovating our dip tanks and making dipping chemicals available.
4. Another challenge is the presence of FMD-positive buffaloes on game reserves. These positive buffaloes are permanent carriers of FMD, meaning areas around the parks will remain at risk of getting infected with FMD for life.

MESSAGE TO FARMERS/LIVESTOCK OWNERS

Our message to the farmers and livestock owners is that;

1. 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.
2. Any cattle, sheep, or goats newly introduced to a farm must be kept separate from resident herds for at least 28 days.
3. Only introduce animals accompanied by a health declaration from known clean farms or areas.
4. Prevent nose-to-nose contact between farm animals and animals outside the farm.



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5. Maintain secure farm boundaries and restrict access for people and vehicles as much as possible.
6. Ensure that farm personnel have no contact with animals outside the property.
7. Ensure that cattle are brought to dip tanks for inspections when required.
8. Farmers are urged to observe stringent biosecurity measures on their farms to protect their herds from infection. INTERVENTIONS As part of our intervention efforts, we will be conducting calf surveillance in vaccinated areas to determine their immune FMD status.

If calves from dip tanks and farms test negative, that will give us an upper hand in requesting our national Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development to uplift FMD restrictions and allow economic activities to resume. A team of veterinary services practitioners has been deployed to the district to conduct vaccinations and implement disease control measures in line with the Disease Management Area (DMA) protocols.

The KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Executive Council has been apprised of the status of FMD and control measures in the KwaZulu-Natal province. The Justice, Crime Prevention and Security Cluster (including South African Police Services (SAPS), COGTA, and Community Safety) provides assistance in controlling animal movement in affected areas.

With a dedicated team of more than 30 animal health technicians and veterinary services under the stewardship of Dr. T Sikhakhane deployed to the Amajuba District, we are going to win the war against FMD. We are leaving no stone unturned as we intensify our efforts to ensuring that all 47,000 cattle in the 73 dip tanks in Amajuba are vaccinated. CONCLUSION As I conclude we also wish to allay the fears of the public by stating that meat from restricted or infected farms is safe for human consumption, though it cannot be exported due to certification limitations. Controlled slaughter of cattle from infected farms is permitted at designated abattoirs with additional biosecurity measures in place.

ENDS.