



KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE

AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**MEDIA STATEMENT ON THE CLASSIFICATION OF FOOT-AND-MOUTH DISEASE
BY THE PREMIER OF KWAZULU-NATAL, HONOURABLE A.T. NTULI**

MARINE BUILDING, DURBAN

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Ladies and Gentlemen of the Media,

We meet today at a critical moment for KwaZulu-Natal's agricultural economy and for thousands of farming households whose livelihoods continue to be under threat. Foot-and-Mouth Disease has moved beyond an animal health concern — it has become a socio-economic and disaster management issue that demands decisive, coordinated action from all spheres of government.

KwaZulu-Natal remains at the centre of this national challenge. The persistence and spread of the disease across all districts of the province, driven in part by non-compliance with animal movement regulations, has placed unprecedented pressure on farmers, disrupted trade, and raised serious concerns around food security and rural livelihoods.

Earlier this week, a comprehensive report detailing the status of the outbreak and the provincial response was submitted to the Provincial Cabinet. Following Cabinet deliberations, the Provincial Disaster Management Centre submitted a preliminary disaster assessment to the National Disaster Management, to consider the classification of the Foot-and-Mouth Disease outbreak affecting KwaZulu-Natal as a state of disaster.

KwaZulu-Natal is currently regarded as the epicentre of the outbreak, with confirmed cases recorded in all districts of the province. The province has a substantial cattle population of 2.4 million, both communal and commercial herds. This province is home to 21% of the nation's dairy animals (475,000), with 213 dairy farms providing employment to 3,120 workers and supporting approximately 639,000 people.

The disease has not only disrupted commercial farming operations, but also had significant impact on communal farmers, particularly in rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal, resulting in significant economic losses due to livestock (calves) deaths, reduced milk production, and



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weight loss, ultimately affecting food security and income. Livelihoods are being destroyed as livestock, especially cattle, are vital assets for rural communities, acting as savings, dowry, and ritual slaughter purposes.

To date, 207 outbreaks have been confirmed, of which 187 remain unresolved, affecting communal herds, feedlots, commercial beef farms and dairy operations alike. The economic consequences have been severe, including trade restrictions, export limitations and sustained pressure on both emerging and commercial farmers.

The Provincial Disaster Management Centre under the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, has activated a Joint Operations Centre to ensure coordinated monitoring, information sharing and rapid response across departments, including the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

The proposed classification of the State of Disaster will provide the province with the necessary framework to reprioritise resources within all organs of state in the Province, mobilise national funding, secure speedy access to vaccines directly from suppliers, and strengthen coordinated interventions, to reduce the impact of the disease, intensify prevention efforts, and support affected farmers and communities.

The Joint Operations Centre, is developing a comprehensive Implementation Plan guided by the proposed classification, and coordinating and monitoring structures are being established to oversee execution, ensure accountability, and track progress. Monthly progress reports will be submitted to the Provincial Cabinet to maintain oversight and momentum.

Since the re-emergence of Foot-and-Mouth Disease in 2021, approximately 800,000 cattle have been vaccinated in KwaZulu-Natal. Of these, 324,700 cattle were vaccinated during the current financial year, both within and outside the Disease Management Area. Surveillance remains a critical pillar of the response, with over 19,000 animals sampled and tested to date.

The province continues to implement a multi-pronged response that includes mass vaccination campaigns, strict movement controls, enhanced biosecurity measures, and



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structured recovery auctions that allow healthy, vaccinated animals to safely re-enter formal trade under veterinary supervision.

Working closely with industry stakeholders, academic institutions and organised agriculture, the Provincial Government is implementing an evidence-based recovery blueprint. This includes intensified awareness campaigns, expanded vaccination programmes targeting communal, commercial and feedlot farmers, and the phased implementation of a livestock identification and traceability system to strengthen compliance and accountability.

Mass vaccination is scheduled to intensify immediately, by procuring available vaccines directly from suppliers, with the objective of reducing Foot-and-Mouth Disease incidents by at least 70 percent over the next 24 months, achieving 90 percent vaccination coverage in targeted populations, and 100 percent coverage in dairy herds.

Let me emphasise that adherence to animal movement regulations is not optional. Illegal movement of livestock continues to undermine containment efforts and places the entire agricultural sector at risk. Compliance is a collective responsibility, and enforcement will be strengthened to protect the province's economy and livelihoods.

The KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government remains fully committed to protecting the agricultural sector, safeguarding jobs and livelihoods, and working with all stakeholders to decisively contain and manage Foot-and-Mouth Disease.

We will continue to communicate transparently with the public and the farming community as interventions are rolled out across the province.



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