



Department of Agriculture & Rural Development

2019/2020 Multi-Planting Season

Livestock farmers urged to take practical measures against drought



KWAZULU-Natal is in the midst of a drought that is impacting the province's farmers and their ability to sustain their operations. Many districts are experiencing challenges with the commencement of planting season and produce farmers are prioritising their water resources for irrigation.

For livestock farmers currently affected by drought, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) has set aside a R20-million emergency relief fund. This follows reports of large numbers of rural livestock dying of malnutrition due to prolonged dry conditions that have existed across the province from August into November, this year.

Of the proposed emergency intervention, R17 million will be used for procurement of livestock feed and R3m for medicine and vaccines to be distributed to the affected farmers from land reform farms, communal livestock owners and farmers and livestock projects supported by DARD.

According to DARD's Agricultural Research and Disaster Management unit report, since August this year, "livestock have been losing condition running after the green regrowth leaving the old grass.

The result has been that the weakened animals get stuck in the

mud, tire out quickly resulting in death".

KZN MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development, Bongive Sithole-Moloi, said while the department is currently conducting an agricultural drought impact assessment to quantify the losses on the ground that are drought incidents, farmers must seriously think about selling their livestock in the rural set auctions to mitigate against terrible capital losses.

"In honesty, the emergency fund is not going to cover every single affected farmer. It is, therefore, wise for livestock owners to begin selling at auctions, bank the money or buy fodder for the little number of cattle they may have left while they wait out the drought," Sithole-Moloi said.

He said that as a drought mitigation effort and in order to enliven the culture of livestock trade through auctions, the department will be hosting sale events in Jozini, Rosboom, Besters, Ntabamhlophe, Madadeni and St Paul Feedlot in November and December 2019.

Sithole-Moloi said the drought impact assessment will be concluded by the end of November 2019 and the outcome will establish if the Department needs to start the process of requesting for the declaration of a disaster.

DARD intensifies its rabies education and vaccination campaigns

SOME parts of KwaZulu-Natal are experiencing a concerning spike in rabies-related incidents.

The past two months alone have seen four human deaths confirmed to be due to rabid canine bites in Ilembe, Ugu and uMgungundlovu district municipalities. These recent deaths include a four-year-old boy from Maphumulo, a 50-year-old woman from Trust Feeds as well as 17 and 38-year-old males from Ezinqoleni and Shakas Head, respectively.

The last upsurge of rabies in KwaZulu-Natal, which occurred between January and September 2018, left eight people dead.

In response to the recent outbreak, the KZN Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) has decided to significantly intensify its public education campaign focusing on pet owners.

This is because vaccination efforts to curb the spread of rabies in KwaZulu-Natal will be ineffective if pet owners ignore their legal obligation to ensure that their dogs and cats are vaccinated.

DARD's Control Animal Health Technician (CAHT) and rabies expert advisor to the World Health Organisation, Kevin le Roux said the under-resourced provincial veterinary service has little hope of curbing the spread without a province-wide buy-in from pet owners and support from all roleplayers.

"If every pet owner were to comply with their legal obligation to ensure their dogs and cats are vaccinated, and every bite victim immediately sought treatment following bites by suspicious dogs, the recurrent outbreaks will be completely suppressed," said Le Roux.

He added that while the inland areas of KZN have all been vaccinated, the coastal areas of Ugu, eThekweni, Ilembe, Jozini, King Cetshwayo and Zululand are still key areas of concern, with 22 vehicles dispatched there.

DARD MEC, Bongive Sithole-Moloi said the department is already treating the rabies spread as an emergency and will be sending an application to national government to officially declare the disease as such.

"Due to the fact that where there is rabies, there are bound to be human deaths, we decided to first bolster our vaccination clinics in all the hotspots and treat this as an emergency. We will, however, be following all the processes in applying to national government to officially declare this as an emergency later," said Sithole-Moloi.

Since DARD first began its massive vaccination programme in the areas of Ndvedwe, Durban and Ilembe (where the first cases of rabies resurgence were reported in October 2017), more than 70 000 dogs and cats have been vaccinated.



Putting planting season into action: MEC Champions rollout programme throughout KZN



KZN MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development, Bongive Sithole-Moloi officially launched the King Cetshwayo District Multi-Planting Season programme.



KZN Education MEC, Kwazi Mshengu in KwaXimba, eThekweni District for the launch of the Multi-Planting Season programme.



MEC for Public Works and Human Settlements, Peggy Nkonyeni engages with members of the community at the Ndvedwe, Ilembe District launch of the Multi-Planting Season programme.



KZN MEC for Transport, Community Safety and Liaison, Bheki Ntuli to participating in planting activities during the Multi-Planting Season event in KwaNongoma .



KZN MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, Nomusa Dube-Ncube engages with produce farmers at the Multi-Planting Season event held in uThukela District.



KZN MEC for Arts and Culture, Sport and Recreation, Hlangwe Mavimbela at the Multi-Planting Season event in uMzinyathi District.



KZN Finance MEC, Ravi Pillay interacts with a member of the farming community at the Multi-Planting Season event hosted by the Department of Treasury in uMgungundlovu District.



KZN MEC for Social Development, Nonhlanhla Khoza assists with the planting at the Multi-Planting Season event held in uGu District.



KZN MEC for Health, Nomagugu Simelane-Zulu during the Amajuba District rollout of the Multi-Planting Season campaign.



KZN MEC for Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Sipho Hlomuka officially launched the Harry Gwala District Multi-Planting Season programme at eZidweni, in Ward 4 of the Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma local municipality.

SPRING HERALDS THE PLANTING SEASON

KwaZulu-Natal Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

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