



**KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE**  
AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

# EFFORTS TO CONTAIN FOOT-AND-MOUTH DISEASE IN KZN INTENSIFY

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*Foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) continues to pose a significant challenge in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), affecting communal dip tanks, small farms, and game reserves.*



*Buffalo are known carriers of FMD, with recent cases reported in five KZN game reserves.  
Photo: FW Archive*

To address the outbreak, the KZN Department of Agriculture and Rural Development has implemented robust measures to limit the spread of the virus.

Speaking to *Farmer's Weekly*, Dr Cameron Kutwana, director of veterinary services in KZN, said in response to the outbreak, movement restrictions had been imposed on cattle near infected dip tanks and surrounding high-risk areas.

"The cattle in these areas were vaccinated to decrease the viral load and reduce further spread of the virus," said Kutwana.



In addition to vaccination, the department is conducting clinical and serological surveillance within a 10km radius of affected dip tanks to monitor for undetected cases.

“Surveillance helps confirm whether the disease has spread unnoticed, which is vital for controlling the outbreak,” Kutwana said.

### **Expansion of the disease management area**

According to Kutwana, authorities are revisiting the boundaries of the disease management area (DMA) to include areas where low-grade virus circulation has been detected.

“Renewed awareness campaigns are being rolled out to make all stakeholders aware of the situation and emphasise the importance of biosecurity,” said Kutwana.

“Steps are also being taken to curb the illegal movement of cattle, a key factor in the disease’s spread.”

There is no blanket ban on cattle movement across provincial borders, but movements out of FMD-controlled areas remain restricted. “Currently, this includes the DMAs in Limpopo, KZN, and the Eastern Cape, as well as the legislated FMD protection and infected zones,” Kutwana said.

Surveillance programmes in Limpopo and the Eastern Cape are in place to assess the extent of virus circulation.

“If all results confirm the absence of a circulating virus, movement restrictions in these provinces may be lifted. However, in KZN, restrictions will remain until there is no evidence of viral circulation,” Kutwana said.

Kutwana added that some areas in KZN, particularly game reserves with infected buffalo, would likely remain legislated as FMD-controlled zones.

### **Vaccination programmes show positive results**

Vaccination has been a cornerstone of FMD control efforts in affected provinces.

“The Eastern Cape has reported no new cases of FMD since mid-September 2024, a positive indicator of the success of combined measures, including vaccination, quarantine, movement restrictions, and enhanced biosecurity,” said Kutwana.



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KZN has adopted similar strategies. “Continuous vaccination campaigns have been rolled out, particularly in areas surrounding infected game reserves,” Kutwana said.

Speaking to *Farmer’s Weekly*, Dr Mpho Maja, director of animal health, said the Agriculture Department was acknowledging the importance of isolating infected animals to minimise the spread of the virus.

“Farmers are encouraged to isolate animals showing clinical signs of FMD and have them vaccinated by state veterinarians. Once recovered, infected animals should be sent to registered abattoirs for slaughter,” said Maja.

He further mentioned that quarantine measures for infected dip tanks remained strict, and weekly herd inspections were conducted to detect new cases early. “We collaborate with private and communal farmers to ensure cloven-hoofed animals are protected. These inspections are complemented by biosecurity measures to limit the risk of further outbreaks,” Maja said.

### **Challenges with infected buffalo in game reserves**

Recently, infected buffalo were reported in five game reserves. Kutwana said that buffalo are permanent carriers of FMD and continue to pose a risk to cloven-hoofed animals.

In response to this, the KZN department of agriculture has implemented continuous vaccination of cattle in areas surrounding these reserves and imposed strict quarantine measures on infected dip tanks.

“Movement of animals from these areas is only permitted for direct slaughter under strict conditions,” Maja said.

Veterinary services in KZN are providing resources such as dipping chemicals, primary animal health facilities, and red-cross permits for direct slaughter to assist farmers. “We are working to ensure farmers have the tools and knowledge to comply with disease control measures,” Maja said.

Maja urged farmers to report any suspected cases of FMD immediately as early detection and isolation of infected animals are critical in preventing the disease from spreading further.