

Progress in combating foot-and-mouth disease in KZN

As KwaZulu-Natal grapples with the fallout from the foot-and-mouth disease outbreak, KZN Agriculture and Rural Development MEC Thembeni kaMadlopha-Mthethwa (middle) urges farmers to prioritise animal health and engage in local agricultural initiatives to secure a sustainable future for the province's farming community.

<https://iol.co.za/news/south-africa/kwazulu-natal/2025-05-26-progress-in-combating-foot-and-mouth-disease-in-kzn/>



The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Agriculture and Rural Development has expressed satisfaction with the progress made in curbing the spread of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) in the province. A traceback epidemiological investigation revealed that cases were linked to an auction in Utrecht, KZN, in February. FMD has since spread to Mpumalanga and Gauteng.

In KZN, an outbreak of FMD was confirmed in Amajuba, uMkhanyakude, Zululand, King Cetshwayo and uMzinyathi districts.

Recently, MEC Thembeni kaMadlopha-Mthethwa conducted a site visit to the affected dip tanks. KaMadlopha-Mthethwa said she was happy with the progress so far, but noted that more work needed to be done to eradicate FMD.

“We have visited different affected areas and witnessed some good work being done, we also continue to plead with our people to bring their cattle for animal health care,” kaMadlopha-Mthethwa said.

The MEC said over 500,000 cattle have been vaccinated to prevent the transmission and spread of FMD. KaMadlopha-Mthethwa said these measures form a vital part of the department’s strategy to regulate and eventually eliminate the disease.

“In efforts to mitigate the spread and manage the disease, we have conducted FMD vaccination awareness campaigns throughout the hotspot areas and continue to urge all livestock farmers to adhere to all stipulated regulations,” kaMadlopha-Mthethwa said.

“We want to reiterate that livestock farmers in the province should stop unauthorised transportation of livestock. Auctioneers and livestock owners are to be vigilant when buying cloven-hoofed animals from other provinces.

“Furthermore, livestock in KZN may only be moved if accompanied by a health declaration from the owner of the animals, attesting to their health at the time of moving.”

KaMadlopha-Mthethwa explained that it was important for farmers to consult their local state vets should they need to transport their cattle. “Our veterinary service is working closely with Road Traffic Inspectorate (RTI) officials to ensure that farmers uphold the law,” stated kaMadlopha-Mthethwa. Meanwhile, TLU SA and the Red Meat Producers Organisation (RPO) are concerned about the economic impact of the FMD outbreaks on commercial farmers. The organisations said that although they acknowledge and support the necessity of biosecurity measures, the prolonged restrictions on the movement of livestock threaten to stop farming operations.

TLU SA general manager Bennie van Zyl said producers at the grassroots level are in a dire situation. “They cannot take their animals to auctions, feedlots or abattoirs, which directly impacts their cash flow needed for essentials like food, electricity, and wages,” Van Zyl said.

Despite understanding the regulations, Van Zyl said producers currently lack market access, and no alternative strategies have been implemented. “We are economically destroying farmers,” Van Zyl said.

RPO chief executive officer Dr Frikkie Maré agrees with Van Zyl. “We must remember that FMD is a state-controlled disease, and the industry can only make recommendations and offer assistance to the government. Since it is state-controlled, the government must realise that its responsibility does not end with disease control but also extends to the businesses and individuals affected by the measures,” Maré said.

The organisations appealed to the government to implement a disaster management programme to enable producers to bridge this difficult time and continue their farming operations.