



## KZN RAMPS UP FIGHT AGAINST FOOT-AND-MOUTH DISEASE

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KwaZulu-Natal's battle to contain foot-and-mouth disease has gathered pace, with more than 625 000 cattle vaccinated since the rollout of a province-wide campaign in late February. MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development, Thembeni kaMadlopha-Mthethwa, is expected to visit the Mpempe diptank in Mnqobokazi, near Hluhluwe, today to assess progress as the programme enters its second day in the Big 5 Hlabisa and Inkosi Mtubatuba local municipalities. The latest phase targets an estimated 55 000 cattle in the two municipalities, including livestock on 24 commercial farms earmarked for vaccination.

The department said vaccination efforts have already been completed in the uGu and Harry Gwala districts, as well as in Jozini and uMhlabuyalingana local municipalities within the uMkhanyakude District.

According to the department, about 25% of the province's 2.5 million cattle herd has been vaccinated.

Authorities aim to reach 80% coverage within the next five months, before administering booster doses.



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The vaccination drive forms part of intensified efforts to curb the spread of the highly contagious disease, which threatens livestock production and rural livelihoods.

KaMadlopha-Mthethwa said veterinary teams are continuing with mass vaccinations, animal identification and monitoring to limit transmission and safeguard the agricultural economy.

She added that the department has put plans in place to address the outbreak and prevent further spread as officials race to bring the situation under control.

The department said the MEC's oversight visit today is expected to provide an on-the-ground assessment of progress in one of the province's key livestock regions.