



KZN DEPLOYING 45 TEAMS TO VACCINATE 2.45 MILLION CATTLE IN MASSIVE FMD CAMPAIGN

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KZN Agriculture MEC Thembeni kaMadlopha-Mthethwa has announced an ambitious operational plan to combat foot and mouth disease outbreak.

KwaZulu-Natal Department of Agriculture and Rural Development has launched what could be one of the province's most ambitious animal health campaigns in recent history. Speaking at the Provincial Stakeholder Engagement meeting in Mtubatuba's Mfekayi Community Hall, Agriculture MEC Thembeni kaMadlopha-Mthethwa unveiled a comprehensive vaccination strategy that aims to reach every single cow in the province within six months.

There's about 2.45 million cattle across both communal and commercial farms that need protection against the current foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) outbreak. To tackle this enormous task, the department said it will deploy 45 vaccination teams daily, systematically working through 2 000 dip tanks across the province.

"I am assured that our capable team of Veterinary Services will complete the mass vaccination programme on schedule," declared MEC kaMadlopha-Mthethwa, expressing confidence in her department's ability to deliver on the ambitious timeline.

Strategic Rollout Approach

The vaccination campaign follows a carefully planned strategy, beginning with district municipalities that border other provinces and neighbouring countries – areas considered most vulnerable to disease spread. Each vaccination team will capture detailed owner and animal information into the provincial Livestock Identification and Traceability System (LITS), ensuring comprehensive tracking throughout the process.

The initiative emerged from extensive consultations with key industry players, including the African Farmers' Association of South Africa (AFASA), Milk Producers' Organisation, Red



Meat Producers' Organisation and Kwanalu, demonstrating a collaborative approach to tackling the outbreak.

Current Crisis Situation

Recent sampling data reveals the severity of the FMD challenge facing KZN. From 18 000 cattle tested across farms and dip tanks in early February, three districts emerged as hotspots: Amajuba District recorded 6 187 cases, followed by uThukela with 4 015 and uMgungundlovu with 2 281 infected animals.

To contain the spread, strict animal movement restrictions remain in place, with special permits required for any livestock transportation, particularly within designated disease management areas. The department is also distributing antibiotics and disinfectants as part of enhanced biosecurity measures, while recommending a 28-day isolation period for any new herd additions.

Beyond Vaccination

While vaccination forms the cornerstone of the response strategy, MEC kaMadlopha-Mthethwa emphasised that success depends on broader compliance measures. "While vaccination is vital, it is equally critical to stop illegal animal movement, which will yield great results in eradicating FMD," she explained to the gathered livestock farmers from uMkhanyakude District.

The comprehensive approach includes ongoing monitoring of commercial herds in partnership with industry stakeholders, ensuring the vaccination programme's effectiveness extends beyond the initial immunisation phase.

With planning complete and teams assembled, the department now awaits the arrival of vaccines to begin the province-wide rollout. If successful, this coordinated response could serve as a model for future disease management initiatives across South Africa's agricultural sector.