



PLAN TO RID SA OF FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE TO BE PHASED OVER 10 YEARS, SAYS STEENHUISEN

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Minister of Agriculture John Steenhuisen said a cabinet memorandum is being prepared to request for FMD to be declared a state of emergency.

<https://www.citizen.co.za/news/south-africa/sa-foot-mouth-disease-phased-10-years-steenhuisen/>



Image for illustrative purposes. Picture: Supplied

The fight against foot and mouth disease (FMD) in South Africa is likely to last for another 10 years, Minister of Agriculture John Steenhuisen has stated.

The minister held a briefing on Wednesday morning to outline the department's long-term strategy for addressing the persistent spread of FMD.

South Africa lost its FMD-free status in 2019, and Steenhuisen said regaining it would require time and discipline.

Movement controls key

The minister announced the formation of a task team featuring 24 government and private veterinarian specialists.

He said the plan would be a "long-term commitment to the health of the economy" that would protect farmers and the country's food supply.

"Our strategy, [which] will be dealt with today, will be a strategy phased over 10 years," said Steenhuisen.



The plan will focus on stabilisation, consolidation, vaccination and finally, the freedom of movement without vaccination.

However, vaccination was not a “silver bullet”, Steenhusien warned, stating that livestock owners had to obey mandates on the movement of animals and ensure strict biosecurity standards.

He stressed that outbreaks were not being reported, leaving the department unable to properly track the spread or contain impacted areas.

“FMD is not magically spread. It is spread through the movement of infected animals.

“The success of the strategy relies on the cooperation of every citizen, and we need our farmers to work hand in hand with state veterinarians to immediately report clinical signs and to strictly adhere to movement controls,” said Steenhusien.

Vaccinations

Part one of the department’s strategy to address the “evolving emergency situation” will feature targeted vaccinations prioritising high-risk areas such as KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape, with the objective of reaching 100% of feedlots and dairy cows.

Within 12 months, the department aims to reduce outbreaks by 70% in high-risk provinces and maintain FMD-free status in buffer provinces through targeted vaccination.

The vaccinations will be done by state veterinarians in partnership with private veterinary services using a variety of locally and internationally produced vaccines of “high potency”.

In high-risk provinces, an immediate vaccination campaign will be repeated in three months.

Areas with recurring infections will receive biannual campaigns where vaccinations will be done in protection zones.

These will go hand-in-hand with joint wildlife surveillance as well as increased surveillance at markets and slaughterhouses.

FMD state of emergency

A more detailed plan will be shared with government officials, and a cabinet memorandum is being prepared to approach the national government to declare FMD a state of disaster.

The Department of Agriculture does not have policing resources, and a declaration of a state of disaster would allow it to utilise law enforcement to police breaches in movement controls.

“The undocumented movement of animals has to come to an end. Again, the disease is spread through infected animals being moved into areas where they contaminate non-infected animals.

“Achieving FMD status is a monumental task that is not going to happen overnight. It is a process, not an event,” said Steenhusien.