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**agriculture, land reform
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Department:
Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



MEDIA STATEMENT

20 MAY 2024

**UPDATE ON THE OUTBREAK OF FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE
IN HUMANSDORP, EASTERN CAPE PROVINCE**

Foot and mouth disease (FMD) infection has been confirmed on three farms in Humansdorp in the Eastern Cape Province. Clinical signs of FMD were observed on the first reported farm (index farm) and samples were collected on 30 April 2024. The laboratory at Onderstepoort confirmed that the results are positive for SAT3 on serology and PCR tests.

The SAT3 virus responsible for the outbreak on the index farm is almost identical to the virus that caused the widespread FMD outbreaks in 2021-2022 in Limpopo, North West, Free State, Gauteng and Mpumalanga.

The Eastern Cape Provincial Veterinary Services placed the index farm under quarantine and a full epidemiological investigation has commenced to identify the possible origin and any other properties that could be at risk. Immediate neighbors and all linked locations are placed under precautionary quarantine, pending clinical and serological investigation to determine their FMD status. One additional farm was found to be positive for FMD as a result of the forward and backward tracing. Cattle and sheep on the two affected farms were vaccinated against FMD to reduce the viral load on these farms.



An alert was received of a third farm in the Humansdorp area where animals were showing clinical signs of FMD. Eastern Cape Provincial Veterinary Services visited the farm on 14 May 2024 and confirmed that the clinical signs are highly suspicious for FMD. Samples were collected and dispatched to the laboratory and the results confirmed FMD infection on the farm.

These recent outbreaks again put the spotlight on the importance of biosecurity on farms. Farmers are advised to not allow animals onto the farm without a health clearance from a veterinarian at origin of the animals. Even if animals appear to be healthy, they can be in the early stages of infection (incubation period) where they are shedding virus without showing clinical signs of disease yet. As prescribed by the Minister of Agriculture in September 2022, all cattle, sheep and goats newly brought onto a farm must be kept separated from the resident herds for at least 28 days.

FMD is a controlled animal disease in terms of the Animal Diseases Act, 1984 (Act No 35 of 1984) and the Act prescribes certain control measures, like isolation and movement control, that are being enforced by Veterinary Services.

Regarding the recent calls for area wide movement restrictions, the decision to implement movement controls in large areas is not taken lightly as they tend to be highly disruptive to industry as a whole by impacting not only those whose animals affected but also innocent bystanders and must be duly gazetted. In the meantime, all properties where the disease has been confirmed, as well as farms in the 10km radius, have been placed under quarantine. No susceptible animals (Cattle, sheep, goats, pigs and cloven hooved game) are allowed onto move into, out of and through these farms. Foot and mouth disease is transmitted mainly by the movement of live clove hooved livestock between different locations, and urge all owners not to move animals if there is a suspicion of illness.

Lastly, I need to emphasized that Section 11 of the Animal Diseases Act imposes a legal duty on any owner or manager of animals to take all reasonable steps to prevent their animals from becoming infected with any disease and to prevent the spread of any disease from their animals or land to other animals or other properties. It is thus important to note that the responsibility for controlling animal diseases, including FMD, lies with all of us, public or private, and is not limited to government, without the co-operation of animal owners and managers, it will be impossible to achieve the desired control and eradication objectives. Livestock owners must also take all reasonable precautions to ensure that their animals do not become infected with any controlled disease, and that they do not allow the spread of disease from their premises, should a disease be suspected.



Should any suspicious clinical symptoms (salivation, blisters in the mouth, limping or hoof lesions) be seen, it should be reported to the local State Veterinarian immediately and such animals must not be moved under any circumstances.

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Issued by the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development:

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