

Fight against foot-and-mouth outbreak makes progress

The Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development says good progress has been made in the investigation of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) outbreak in Limpopo's Molemole Municipality.



Image source: [Gallo/Getty](#)

The department said following initial trace-back exercises, the outbreak was linked to four auctions held at two auction premises in September and October 2019.

"Testing of the primary linked locations is almost completed and a number of secondary locations have been identified for follow-up testing. Precautionary quarantine has already been lifted on 127 of the linked locations that have since tested negative," the department said on Tuesday.

Since the start of the outbreak in November 2019, 19 locations that tested positive for FMD have been identified.

"The last positive location case was reported to the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) on 26 February 2020 and no new positive locations have been identified since. Quarantine has been lifted on three locations, with 16 properties remaining under quarantine," said the department.

Meanwhile, Minister Thoko Didiza lifted the blanket ban on the gathering of animals on 17 February 2020.

"This temporary ban was instituted as a means to prevent the explosive spread of the disease," the department said.

Departmental veterinary services continue to liaise with affected farmers to enable them to slaughter cattle from quarantined feedlots at abattoirs specifically approved for this purpose.

The department has reiterated that FMD is not contagious to humans and the meat from animals that have recovered from the disease is safe for human consumption.

"Owing to the disease risk posed by high-risk materials, such as heads, feet, and offal, specific measures have been introduced to prevent any inadvertent disease spread through these products."

Permission granted to slaughter animals on affected premises

The department has granted permission to eight feedlots to safely slaughter animals from affected premises at two abattoirs designated for this purpose.

"This process is continuing and more than 9,000 animals from farms under quarantine have been safely processed. Once all animals on affected properties have been slaughtered, quarantine can be lifted and the farming operations can resume."

Beef trading resumes

The trade of beef with most trade partners has resumed with most retaining the negotiated agreements for safe commodities.

"The latest trade of beef to open was the Kingdom of eSwatini. Updated information was supplied to the veterinary authorities in order to provide assurance on the safe trade of commodities from other provinces."

The department has also advised livestock owners and traders to be cautious when moving animals and to take the "buyer beware" precautions.

The most important points to remember remain:

- Do not move animals showing signs of disease;
- Do not buy animals from unknown origins;
- Do not buy animals originating from known infected areas;
- Only buy animals from known and proven sources;
- Insist on a veterinary health declaration before animals are brought onto the farm; and
- Always place new arrivals in isolation until you can satisfy yourself of their health status.

FMD free zone status

Meanwhile, the department has warned that the lifting of the temporary ban on gatherings of animals does not imply that the outbreak in the free zone has been declared over.

"Once the process of following up on all linked premises has been concluded, the department will embark on a general surveillance strategy in the areas affected by the November 2019 outbreak. The outcome of which will determine the process of regaining international FMD free zone status going forward."

The department acknowledged the livestock industry, including the veterinary officials on the ground, and the affected farmers for their concerted efforts and cooperation.

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