

Updated report: Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD)

The Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) and the Director-General of Animal Health, Dr Maja, released an updated report on the FMD situation on 15 February 2019.

In the report it is indicated that 22 000 animals have been vaccinated since 14 January 2019. More or less 12 000 of these animals have been vaccinated in the disease management area and all vaccinated animals have been marked to identify them.

A complete standstill of all cloven-hoofed animals in the FMD controlled area is still in force. There is currently no sign that the disease has spread beyond the declared disease management area and the movement of cloven-hoofed animals (including game) and unprocessed animal products are allowed within South Africa on merit.

Exports of wool to China

China has banned all imports of unprocessed wool due to the FMD outbreak. Until date, China has given no official indication on the acceptance of wool exports.

Hides and skins

No raw salted hides and skins can at this stage be exported to China. It is especially problematic for merino farmers as more or less 90% of these skins are normally exported to China.

The Trade task team for FMD with support from the Director-General is in the process to finalise a visit to China. This visit will probably be headed by the DG to negotiate the trade agreements between South Africa and China with regard to wool, skins, hides and red meat. China requires a veterinary health certificate that certifies that the skins are from a FMD free zone, which is currently impossible to provide. DAFF requested China to accept a certificate which confirms that South Africa follows the recommendations of the world organisation for animal health, the OIE. It determines that all skins are salted for a period of 28 days. China has not yet reacted to the request. The same situation applies to blue and split skins.

South Africa is also currently unable to export blue and split skins to Thailand and Uruguay. However, there are no restrictions on exports to EU-countries or Turkey. Dorper skins are not affected by any restrictions because it is mainly exported to EU-countries in a salted form.

Meat markets

Various requests were made for the reopening of meat markets, with limited success. More detail on these markets will soon be available.

Trade with Jordan and Qatar has been resumed. Countries like Egypt and the Arabic Emirates have submitted a revised request for beef, but the new draft health certificates have not yet been received. Draft certificates for trade with Bahrain, Kuwait and Swaziland have been submitted, but feedback is still awaited. Stumbling blocks are experienced in terms of language, especially with Mozambique. Mozambique officials indicated that they are planning to visit South Africa and the infected area.

The RPO's message

- The RPO has for the past three years been warning about the high risk of a FMD outbreak.
- The EU also pointed out the risk.
- The industry is in the process of acquiring a legal opinion on DAFF's responsibility in this regard.
- Capacity problems are the order of the day at the national and provincial DAFF's.
- It is now clear that the current outbreak will not be effectively managed without the involvement of the industries. Further outbreaks can be expected.
- The process is managed by the national and provincial Animal Health Forums.
- The RPO presented a comprehensive information day on its own cost in the affected area to inform the industry and farmers of the situation.
- The RPO is instrumental to maintain the provincial Animal Health Forums with own funds.
- The RPO partakes and give inputs at the Technical-, Trade- and Communication task teams.
- The implementation of a national traceability system is part of the solution and the RPO has appropriated R100 000 to kick start the process and is also represented on the working group in this regard.
- The RPO is of the viewpoint that provision must, in the next levy period, be made for more capacity to address biosecurity aspects.

- The RPO is optimistic that trade in hides, skins, wool, mohair and embryos will be reinstated before our FMD free zone status are retrieved.
- The 12 000 cattle in the disease control area should be slaughtered before South Africa can apply for the reinstatement of its FMD free zone status.
- The slaughter process and related compensation must still be finalised and clarified with the local producers, who are mostly emergent and subsistence farmers.
- The possibility exists that our trade partners will still refuse imports.
- It is the RPO's viewpoint that if all goes to plan, South Africa will not retrieve its FMD free zone status before 2020.

The RPO encourages producers to liaise with their local Animal Health Forums to stay informed. Any enquiries can be directed to the RPO. The RPO endeavours to have all new information available on its website and producers are welcome to make use of it.