

PRESS RELEASE

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE.

RESPONSE TO A REPORTED OUTBREAK OF FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE IN THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA.

Date: 08th January 2019

The Republic of South Africa has reported an outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease outside the traditional control areas of the disease. Samples collected from cattle suspected to be suffering from the disease, in the Vhembe District, Limpopo province, tested positive. RSA is conducting further investigations to determine the extent of the outbreak and their control measures will be based on the findings.

The outbreak is in the OIE (World Organization for Animal Health) recognised '*Foot and Mouth disease free zone where vaccination is not practiced*'. This is also the zone from which RSA trades internationally in animals and products of animal origin. As a result of this development the OIE recognition for FMD freedom has been suspended and RSA has declared that any exports requiring attestation for FMD freedom cannot be certified.

In response to the declaration by RSA, Government has found it necessary to suspend the importation of all cloven hoofed animals and products. The purpose of the suspension is to protect Eswatini from possible importation of infected animals or products and also to allow RSA to conclude investigations and implement control measures. The following prevention measures are of particular note:

1. Issuing of import permits for cloven- hoofed animals, including domestic animals (cattle, pigs, sheep, goats, etc.) and wildlife (antelopes, wildebeest, etc.) is suspended with immediate effect. Import Permits already issued must be returned back to the Veterinary Department.
2. Straying and/or repatriation of stray cloven- hoofed animals is strictly prohibited
3. Issuing of import permits for raw food of cloven-hoofed animal origin is suspended with immediate effect

In this regard, the Veterinary Department stands ready to advise further on the prevention measures implementation modalities. Government will continue to monitor the situation and modify the prevention measures accordingly.

Foot and mouth disease is a major trade barrier wherever it occurs. The virus spreads easily and very fast. It is important to maintain our vigilance against this disease including; maintenance of cordon fences, proper weekly inspection of animals and quarantine of imported animals (domestic and wild animals)

The ministry regrets any inconvenience presented by the situation to farmers, business people and the nation at large. We take this opportunity and request our livestock farmers to avail their good quality slaughter cattle to the market to ensure adequate supply of meat and meat products in the country.

BY THE PRINCIPAL SECRETARY