

PRESS RELEASE

(for immediate release)

FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE IN THE MOLEMOLLE DISTRICT OF LIMPOPO

The Red Meat Producers' Organisation (RPO) noted with shock and surprise the joint press release of the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development and the livestock industry, which places a temporary ban on livestock auctions in the Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Gauteng and Northwest provinces.

The RPO recognises the urgency to control the new outbreak that has a critical impact on the economy of agriculture. In our opinion, stopping auctions over such a large area will not contribute to solving the problem, but will aggravate it.

Since the outbreak became known, the RPO has been part of the following actions:-

- The RPO was part of the delegation convened by the Minister of Agriculture last week. Shortcomings on the handling of foot-and-mouth disease were pointed out to the Minister as well as the negative impact on the economy. An urgent appeal was made to the Minister to increase capacity at the national and provincial Departments and to provide additional funds to address the problem.
- At a meeting of the Red Meat Industry Forum last week, it was decided to insist on an urgent appointment with the Minister on behalf of the red meat industry. The purpose of the meeting will be to convey the responsibilities and duties of the national and provincial Department of Agriculture as well as the rights of other industry stakeholders.

- An urgent meeting coordinated by the national Animal Health Forum will be held this afternoon with representatives from auctioneers.
- The Technical Committee advising the Department on behalf of the industries was reactivated by the Minister and will meet on Monday, 18 November 2019. The RPO is represented on the working group.
- The Trade Committee, which focuses on promoting meat exports and livestock products for exports, has also been reactivated by the Minister.

The RPO's position is as follows:-

- Stopping livestock auctions in four provinces is causing panic and will not solve the problem at this stage.
- Government will have to deal much more seriously with foot-and-mouth disease.
- The manner in which the outbreaks have been dealt with since January 2019, is unacceptable.
- The RPO is willing to work together and will help to make more industry funds available.
- The movement of livestock should be kept to a minimum.
- Suspicious cases must be reported to the state veterinarian immediately.
- The RPO will seek to keep producers informed of further developments.

The RPO requests that communication in this matter needs to be urgent and correct in order to ensure that producers are informed accordingly.

Foot-and-mouth disease has no impact on humans and it is safe to consume products from split hoof animals such as meat and dairy products.

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Date : 15 November 2019

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