

PRESS RELEASE

(for immediate release)

BAN LAMES THE RED MEAT INDUSTRY

“It is of critical importance that the situation in the red meat industry normalise as soon as possible in order for auctions and livestock shows, to continue in at least eight of the nine provinces”, says Mr Koos van der Ryst, Chairman of the national RPO.

This follows after a countrywide ban on livestock auctions was last year imposed after the outbreak of foot and mouth disease (FMD) in the Limpopo province.

“The current situation is untenable. It puts a damper on the red meat industry, it prohibits normal price forming mechanisms and has a negative impact on commercial and especially emerging producers.”

“We request the Department of Agriculture to take the extremely drastic measures into reconsideration and to isolate the affected area in order for the situation to normalise again.”

Testing for possible new outbreaks continued during the festive season and 25 suspect facilities were tested, with three which tested positive. The virus activity at one of the instances cannot be linked to the other outbreaks, and it is a serious situation.

The outbreaks are still localised and the RPO is therefore of the opinion that the area should be isolated and that the rest of the country return to normal under certain prerequisites.

The RPO requested the Technical Committee on FMD to finalise a policy for the re-opening of auctions.

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“The industry will have to enforce self-regulating strongly and we will have to accept that we have entered a new dispensation. Traceability, the marking of livestock, the declaration of the animal health status of livestock and the registration of agents will have to be part of the policy”, Van der Ryst says.

The RPO is fully aware of the seriousness of the situation given the fact that FMD is a viral disease which can rapidly spread and which has a drastic impact on international trade.

“We have lost our FMD free zone status at the International Animal Health Organisation (OIE), and we must be very sensitive to not endanger our bilateral trade agreements, of which the agreement with China are surely the most important.

“Every producer has the responsibility to ensure that all necessary protocols are followed in order to ensure bio-security on the farm.”

The RPO will give its full cooperation to the Department because the whole issue is a collaborative effort between the red meat industry and the authorities.

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