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PRESS RELEASE
(for immediate publication)

**OUTBREAK OF FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE IN THE
NORTH WEST PROVINCE**

The RPO took note of the outbreak of foot and mouth disease in the Potchefstroom area of the North West Province.

"The outbreak is far removed from the traditional foot and mouth disease endemic areas and could have a drastic impact on the livestock industry if not handled properly," said Mr James Faber, Chairman of the national RPO.

The outbreak is localised because an infected animal has been brought in and if handled correctly, the outbreak can be resolved very quickly.

It would once again appear, as with the previous outbreaks, that cattle were illegally moved out of the endemic area. The RPO wants to put it on record that individuals and institutions that are guilty of illegally moving livestock from the endemic areas, in collaboration with the Red Meat Industry Forum, will be prosecuted.

The time has come for farmers to implement traceability / management systems to reduce risks. It is also essential that the industry self-regulate and keep the movement of livestock to a minimum. Any incoming livestock must first be quarantined to ensure that they do not pose a risk.

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The Agricultural Produce Agents Council's (APAC) biosecurity measures at auctions/agent trades, need further momentum.

The RPO is instrumental in the establishment of provincial animal health forums and these forums already play an extremely important role in Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal. Animal health forums play an equally important role in stating the industry's views at joint operational committee meetings.

"Collective collaboration within the animal health forums with all the different industries and role players is now more essential than ever before," said Mr Faber.

Last year, the Minister of Agriculture appointed a task team to advise her on biosecurity. The RPO has provided comprehensive input and is of the opinion that the task force's recommendations should now be made urgent. Foot and mouth disease must therefore now be given real priority in order to make the industry sustainable.

"The red meat industry is seen as the sleeping giant in South African agriculture and the only aspect that can prevent it is a lack of control of animal diseases, and specifically foot and mouth disease. We cannot allow that to happen. " says Mr. Faber.

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