

## **PRESS REALEASE**

(for immediate release)

### **SHORTAGE OF STRATEGIC VACCINES CAUSES DISASTER IN THE RED MEAT INDUSTRY**

"The shortage of strategic vaccines in the livestock and animal industries has now caused a state of disaster in the red meat industry."

"Commercial and emerging producers are now suffering serious losses due to bluetongue outbreaks which cause up to 50% mortality among herds and African horse sickness among horses and donkeys which play a supporting role in the production process of red meat" says the Chairman of the national RPO, James Faber .

The Red Meat Producers' Organisation (RPO) warned and predicted that this would happen due to the shortage of supply of certain vaccines that are only produced by Onderstepoort Biological Products (OBP).

"It is tragic and this could have been prevented if the proposed feasible action steps had been taken by the authorities. We feel the authorities have let the industry down", said Mr Faber.

It is ironic that the industry is now implementing measures and strategies how to produce without the vaccines. Despite the RPO's advice against it, some producers are now resorting to the use of illegal unregistered vaccines which pose great risks.

= 2 =

The RPO supports the actions of the national Animal Health Forum (NAHF) and is also a member of the NAHF. The RPO was part of the NAHF's actions which included an open discussion with the Honorable Minister of Agriculture on 30 March 2023. During the meeting a sub-committee was appointed to urgently make proposals to advise the Minister and the Minister has set a deadline of 28 April for this. On inquiry to the NAHF, the committee did not meet, despite several inquiries from the NAHF.

The lack of urgency by the authorities is extremely frustrating for the RPO.

The slowness to take the necessary proposed corrective actions undermines the objectives of the AAMP (*Agriculture Agro-processing Master Plan*) and has serious animal welfare implications and also poses risks to human health.

On several occasions, the NAHF has done the needs assessment for vaccines on behalf of the livestock and animal industries and proposed solutions that include, among others:-

- Vaccines must be produced by more than one service provider in order to discount risk and ensure competitiveness;
- Capacity at the office of the Registrar of Act 36 must be increased to process registration applications more quickly. The same principles apply to Act 35 applications.
- Certain vaccines can be produced with the help of the private sector or produced under a license on behalf of OBP.

The RPO urgently requests that the solutions be announced and implemented by the authorities within urgent timelines.

"Although it is already too late, everything possible must be done to prevent national pandemics" said Mr Faber.

= 3 =

The RPO wants to put it on record that in the interests of food security, poverty alleviation, implementation of the AAMP, human health, export strategies and animal welfare, more drastic steps will be taken if necessary, to ensure that the vaccine issue be resolved urgently.



**DATE** : 5 May 2023

**EQUIRIES**

James Faber

**Chairman**

083 292 2556

Willie Clack

**1st Vice Chairman**

082 574 2653