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PRESS RELEASE – POSITIVE FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE RESULTS IN THE MOLEMOLE DISTRICT OF LIMPOPO

The confirmation by the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries case of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) has been identified in the Molemole district of Limpopo is of great concern. It not only has a negative impact on the red meat industry, but on the agricultural sector as a whole.

After the outbreak in January 2019, hard work has been done to recover South Africa's status as an FMD free zone. The latest development is a setback. It is imperative that the extent of the problem be determined on an urgent basis.

The issue of accountability must also seriously be considered. FMD is a controlled disease and its control is therefore the primary responsibility of the provincial and national Departments of Agriculture. The industries are by means of the national and provincial Animal Health Forums involved and play a supportive role in the control of the disease.

Although there is full understanding for the fact that the authorities are currently experiencing a drawback in terms of capacity, it is most probably time to prioritise and to focus on the critical aspects of control measures of diseases like FMD, which has trade implications.

The outbreak once again underlines the urgent need for the establishment of a traceability system in the livestock industry. More focus must also be placed on the establishment of compartments in terms of animal diseases in order to prevent the suspension of international trade when a FMD outbreak occurs in only an isolated area.

The RPO will, like in the past, render its support by means of the provincial and national Animal Health Forums in the efforts to find solutions to the problem.

It is now of critical importance to strengthen security measures on the farm, while the movement of livestock in the area must be minimised. Any suspected case of the disease in animals must be reported immediately to the local state veterinarian.

The red meat industry is internationally very competitive. The RPO will strive towards the improvement of the country's export status as exports will be to the benefit of all role players in the red meat value chain.

The RPO undertakes to provide its full cooperation to address the problem in conjunction with the relevant authorities and in cooperation with the national and provincial Animal Health Forums. It is now clear that the issue has to be handled with much more urgency.

The disease does not affect human beings and it is safe to consume products of cloven-hoofed animals, such as meat and milk.

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