

Foot and Mouth Disease: Vhembe Outbreak and Surveillance Update

30 January 2019



**agriculture,
forestry & fisheries**

Department:

Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

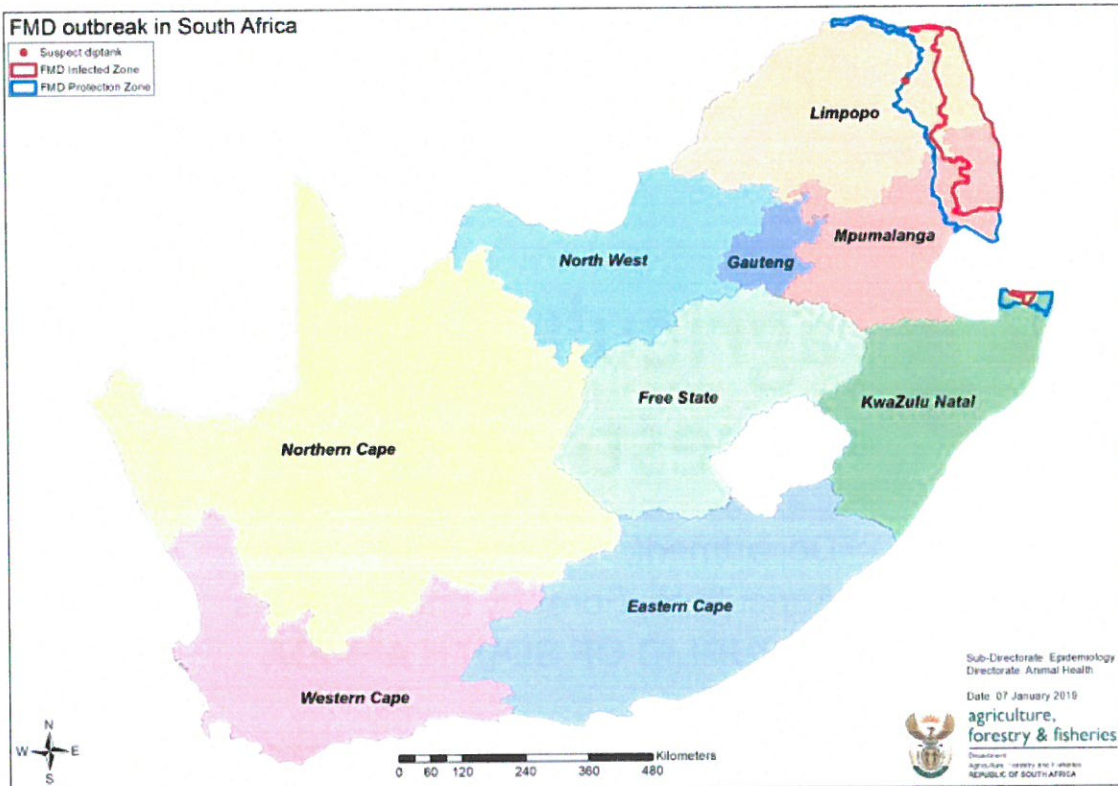
Report compiled by:

Directorate: Animal Health

1. Introduction and summary

On 7 January 2019, an outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) was confirmed in cattle in the Vhembe district of Limpopo Province. The outbreak occurred in the high surveillance area of the FMD Free Zone, immediately adjacent to the protection zone. The outbreak was reported to the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and, as a result, South Africa lost its FMD free zone without vaccination status.

Map 1: Location of the FMD outbreak in the FMD free zone of South Africa



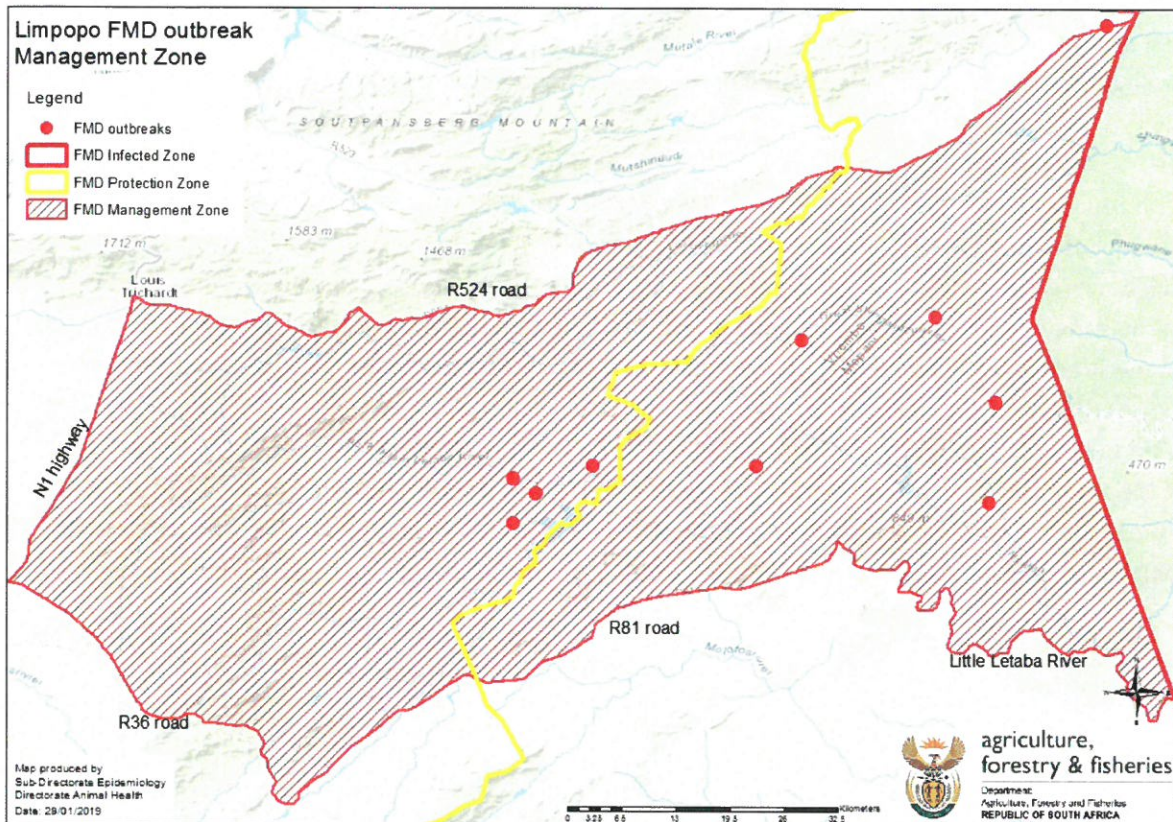
2. Outbreaks reported

Up to 30 January 2019, 4 positive locations in Limpopo Province have been reported to the OIE. These locations were confirmed on PCR and serology tests, performed at the Transboundary Animal Disease programme of Onderstepoort Veterinary Research. The animals affected by the outbreak are cattle kept in rural villages with communal diptanks and grazing. The affected villages are in close proximity, within a 20 kilometre radius. The estimated number of cattle in the 20km around the affected villages is 15 000, but more accurate census figures will be compiled as soon as possible.

3. Control measures implemented

A disease management area was declared, being the area enclosed by the R81 Road, the R36 Road, N1 and the R524 Road. The exact boundaries of this area will be published in the government gazette.

Map 2: Area defined as the FMD outbreak Management Zone



A Joint Operations Committee (JOC) was established and meets on a daily basis, consisting of Traffic, Departmental and District Disaster Management, Police, Industry (the National Animal Health Forum, Feedlot association) and Provincial and DAFF veterinary officials. The JOC has facilitated the placement of 15 road blocks at strategic points.

A Veterinary Operations Committee (VOC), which meets daily, was also established. The VOC has three main activities – inspections/surveillance, vaccination and movement control. Culling of affected or in-contact animals in the area is at the moment not advocated.

3.1 Inspections / surveillance:

Clinical and serological surveillance are conducted in all epidemiological groups in the Disease Management Area. Inspections are conducted by 19 'clean' teams in the 20 km radius around the affected villages, where vaccinations are also carried out, as well as in the rest of the Disease Management Area. An additional 3 teams are allocated to specifically deal with the animals in known positive locations.

Local livestock owners were urged to report any suspicion of clinical cases to the veterinary or extension officials in the area. All potential FMD cases reported to the Veterinary Authorities are

investigated and animals are inspected for clinical signs of FMD. Where suspicious clinical signs are found, samples are collected and sent to the laboratory for confirmation. Six points where suspect clinical signs were reported by the public – both inside and outside the Disease Management Area - were inspected and found to be negative for FMD.

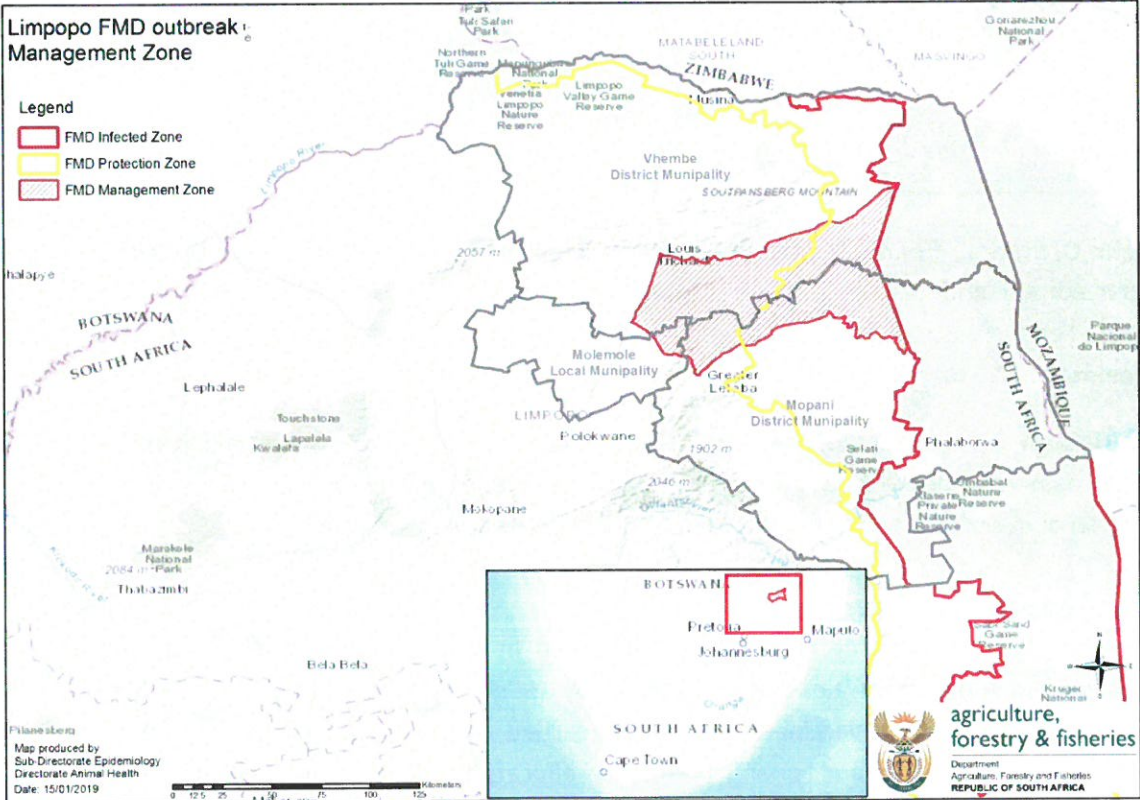
3.2 Vaccination:

Vaccination of cattle commenced on 14 January 2019, starting with cattle in the affected villages, as well as cattle in the 20km radius around the affected villages. To date, the total number of cattle vaccinated is over 10 000. Vaccinated cattle are marked to identify them as vaccinated.

3.3 Movement control:

With regards to the FMD Management area, no cloven hoofed animals are allowed to move within, into or out of the area – there is a complete standstill of cloven hoofed animals. Movement permits, which were previously issued for this purpose, were withdrawn. Products from cloven hoofed animals may be allowed to move within this area, but movements out of the area will be considered on merit and only allowed with permits issued by the local state veterinarian and in compliance with the conditions of such permits.

In addition, movement of cloven hoofed animals (including wildlife) and unprocessed products out of Mopani District and Vhembe District as well as the Molemole Municipality of Capricorn District is discouraged until further notice. Only products processed using methods validated to inactivate the FMD virus are safe to be moved out of the area.



4. Epidemiological investigation

The virus was identified as SAT2. This outbreak is regarded as a continuation of the outbreaks in the FMD protection zone which were reported in Vhembe and Giyane in May and August 2018. This SAT2 virus strain is closely related to the virus found in carrier buffalo in the Kruger National Park in the adjacent FMD infected zone. It is therefore most likely that the origin of the original outbreak in 2018 was due to contact between stray buffalo, escaping from the FMD infected zone and coming into contact with adjacent communal cattle. A joint effort by DAFF and SANParks is underway to identify and repair breaks in the Kruger National Park fence adjacent to Limpopo.

5. Trade implications

As a result of this outbreak, South Africa lost its OIE recognised FMD free zone without vaccination status. Any exports where FMD free zone attestation is required cannot be certified. This has had a devastating effect on trade of cloven hoofed animals and their products from South Africa. Trade partners have been notified of the outbreak and guarantees provided for products which do not pose a risk of transmitting the disease, such as heat treated meat and dairy products, deboned and matured beef, scoured wool, salted hides and skins, and livestock embryos. Trade partners are also requested to consider importation of pork products from known FMD free pig compartments. Trade restrictions on the export of processed products have been relaxed by many trade partners and, where necessary, negotiation of new health certificates is underway.

6. Awareness and extension

Press releases were issued to inform the public and the industry of the outbreak, the clinical signs of FMD, the control measures implemented and the effects on trade. Farmers in the whole country are cautioned to observe bio-security measures – not to allow any new animals into their herds, and to minimize the movement of their own herds to other farms.

During a meeting between the industries – represented by the National Animal Health Forum – and the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, the decision was made to establish joint task teams to streamline the work required in terms of the control of the outbreak, the promotion of continued trade in safe commodities and the ongoing communication with all stake holders.

A meeting in Makhado was attended by over 150 stakeholders, representing the RPO, NERPO, Wool-growers, Milk Producers, Auctioneers, Wildlife farmers and veterinarians. The media was also present. This meeting was organised by the RPO and was a good platform for DAFF and the National Animal Health Forum to clarify identified misconceptions about the outbreak. The meeting was well received and, following the discussions, there was good support from industry on the disease control measurements implemented.


Director Animal Health

Date: 2018-01-30

