

Foot and Mouth Disease: Mtubatuba Outbreak Report and Surveillance Update

25 June 2021



agriculture, land reform
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Department:

Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development
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Report compiled by:

Directorate: Animal Health

This report includes all information as available by close of business 25 June 2021

1. Introduction and summary

In May 2021, an outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) in cattle was confirmed at a dip tank in the Umkhanyakude District Municipality of the KwaZulu-Natal Province. Since the discovery and reporting of the index case, eleven other locations have been identified as FMD positive and reported to the OIE. All locations identified lie in the suspended FMD free zone and no positive locations have been detected outside the KwaZulu-Natal Province thus far. The affected areas comprise mostly of communal grazing land. Disease investigations are still ongoing to determine to what extent the disease has spread. The following map shows positive locations to date. Note that locations with close proximity may appear as a single location on this map.

Map 1: FMD positive locations in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa



2. Affected locations

The index case of the outbreak was detected on 27 May 2021, when clinical signs of FMD were observed in cattle during routine dip tank inspections in a communal grazing area in the Mtubatuba Local Municipality in the Umkhanyakude District Municipality of the KwaZulu-Natal Province. The twelve positive dip tank locations identified to date encompass communal grazing land and have formed two clusters as seen on both maps, the northern cluster being in the Nongoma and uPhongolo Local Municipalities and the southern cluster being in the Mtubatuba and Mbonambi Local Municipalities. Varied clinical signs have been reported with cattle in some serologically positive dip tank locations showing no visible signs of infection, while others show classical clinical signs of FMD. Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) as well as serological detection of antibodies against the virus at the Onderstepoort Veterinary Research OIE Reference Laboratory - Agricultural Research Council, confirmed all infections to date.

3. Control measures implemented

The District Municipalities of King Cetshwayo and Umkhanyakude, as well as the Local Municipalities of Nongoma, Ulundi and Pongola in the Zululand District Municipality remain under standstill with regards to movement of cloven-hoofed animals. No cloven-hoofed animals or their products are allowed to move in, through or out of the affected areas. The details of this Disease Management Area will be published in the Government Gazette. Movement control protocols are being finalized and aim to monitor and control movement of livestock and livestock products out of, into, within and through the affected area. Attention is also paid to protocol development that will ensure biosafety and biosecurity of slaughtering operations at abattoirs in the affected area. These protocols will be implemented until such time that it is established that there is no further possibility of the spread of the disease. The conditions of the movement control protocol will be reviewed based on the continuation of disease investigations that will determine the extent of the outbreak.

No emergency vaccination has been conducted as yet. The use of vaccination will be considered once the extent of the outbreak and the rate of spread have been determined through continued epidemiological investigations.

Dip tank and farm inspections are carried out daily by Veterinary Services in the Province. Strict biosecurity measures are in place when inspecting and sampling around infected locations as well as throughout the areas at risk to avoid the spread of disease through direct or indirect contact.

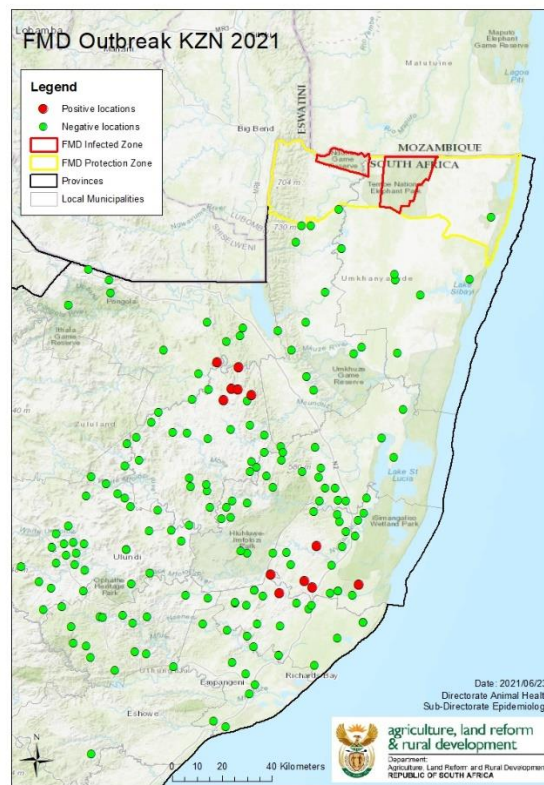
4. Epidemiological investigation

Clinical examinations and serological testing of all cloven-hoofed animals in and around the affected areas are still continuing, with the aim of determining the prevalence of the disease and the extent of the outbreak. As at 25 June 2021, the infection has been confirmed in twelve dip tanks. High risk dip tank locations have been identified by Veterinary authorities and samples from these locations are undergoing priority testing at the laboratory to ensure the swiftest and most effective way of determining the extent to which the disease has spread. This adds value to the mobilization of Veterinary Services ground teams and allows for effective utilization of resources.

As part of the forward and backward tracing operations in the Province, animals that originated from suspect locations were inspected and tested at a feedlot in the Uthukela District Municipality. The feedlot has been placed under quarantine while further investigations and testing are taking place. The outcome of the investigation will determine additional measures to be implemented at the feedlot.

To date, a total of 13 229 sera samples have been collected from 390 locations. Map 2 shows the positive dip tanks (red), as well as dip tanks within the same area where clinical and serological tests have shown the disease to be absent (green).

Map 2: FMD positive locations in KwaZulu-Natal Province



The virus responsible for the outbreak is a SAT 2 serotype and is closely related to a SAT 2 virus responsible for an outbreak that occurred in the Protection Zone in northern Limpopo Province in 2019.

Epidemiological investigation is continuing, with backward and forward tracing in process to determine the possible origin of the virus, as well as pinpoint locations to which the disease might have spread. Movements of cattle and other cloven-hoofed livestock that occurred in the past 3 months in the affected area as well as others linked to the sources or destinations of the translocated animals are being investigated. The source of this outbreak is also being investigated.

Passive surveillance is being strengthened in the rest of the country via communication with state and private veterinarians as well as physical visits to owners of cloven-hoofed livestock and chairpersons of dip tank associations. All mentioned parties are urged to be vigilant for any clinical signs that might represent those of Foot and Mouth Disease and are asked to report such suspicions immediately for further epidemiological investigations.

Ground team members in the KwaZulu-Natal Province are governing communication efforts such as visits to livestock associations and traditional authorities in order to provide information, raise awareness and address concerns of farmers in and surrounding affected areas.

5. Trade implications

Following the loss of the OIE recognised FMD free status in January 2019, agreements were negotiated with trade partners on the export of safe commodities, including heat treated meat and dairy products, deboned and matured beef, scoured wool, salted hides and skins and livestock embryos. Most trade partners have thus far still retained the negotiated agreements for these commodities, based on the guarantees provided for processing to ensure inactivation of the virus. South Africa is confident to certify for the safety of pork products from known FMD free pig compartments. Communication efforts are conducted to keep trade partners up to date with the disease situation in the country as well as the implementation of control measures to contain the disease.

In May 2021, Botswana announced the banning of the importation of live cloven-hoofed animals and their products as well as veld grass, bedding and manure-contaminated vehicles from South Africa. Live cloven-hoofed animals and their products originating from South Africa are also not allowed to travel through Botswana to other countries. These regulations from the government of Botswana remain in place until further notice.

In June 2021, it was announced that live cloven-hoofed animals (importation and repatriation of stolen animals) as well as raw products from cloven-hoofed animals is banned from entering Swaziland. Products of cloven-hoofed animal origin that have been adequately processed via canning, cooking and pasteurization from all Provinces except Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal will be allowed to enter Swaziland. Regulations regarding this importation ban will be adjusted with the changing FMD situation in KwaZulu-Natal Province.

Director Animal Health

Date: