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KZN's R134.3m funding aims to eradicate foot-and-mouth disease

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THE KwaZulu-Natal Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) has allocated R134.3 million to support livestock improvement, particularly mitigating foot-and-mouth disease (FMD).

MEC Thembeni kaMadlopha-Mthethwa made the announcement during her 2025/26 budget vote in the KZN legislature this week.

KaMadlopha-Mthethwa stated that mandatory veterinary services for clients will be enhanced in the current financial year to ensure healthy animals, sustainable and profitable animal production enterprises, safe trade in animals and products of animal origin, and the well-being of animals and the public.

She said seven new outbreaks were reported in KZN in February and March this year, bringing the total number of outbreaks in the province to 164.

As a result, the national Cabinet supported extending KZN's Disease Management Area (DMA) boundaries to curb further FMD outbreaks. The areas include Big Five Hlabisa, Mtubatuba, Nongoma, Ulundi, uMhlabuyalingana, Jozini, Pongola, Abaqulusi, Mfolozi, uMhlathuze, Mthonjaneni, Nqutu, Nkandla, uMlalazi, and Mandeni municipalities.

"As it stands, no cloven-hoofed animals (cattle, sheep, and goats), their products, or genetic material may be moved from or within the DMA unless authorised by a state veterinary permit. Movement control is applied to affected locations. Infected locations outside the DMA are similarly quarantined until the disease is eradicated," kaMadlopha-Mthethwa said.

She further said the department, working with industry, continues to conduct clinical surveillance to ensure early detection of disease and to determine the absence of disease in previously affected dip tanks. These are supported by an intensive vaccination drive in areas

diagnosed to be infected.

KaMadlopha-Mthethwa commended department officials, industry, and the security cluster, particularly the South African Police Service, for continuously hosting interventions to mitigate any further spread. Significant strides have been made in containing the spread and restoring economic normalcy.

"Over the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework, an amount of R134.3 million has been allocated to support livestock improvement, particularly mitigating against foot-and-mouth disease (FMD)," kaMadlopha-Mthethwa said.

"These funds will be used for dipping chemicals, other veterinary remedies, and the employment of 77 dip tank assistants through the EPWP programme in the FMD disease management area to assist the livestock associations to keep proper records and follow up on vaccinations, dipping sessions, etc."

KaMadlopha-Mthethwa added that the department will also provide maintenance items such as treated poles and steel pipes to livestock associations to maintain the dip tank infrastructure.

The department also plans to expand its public awareness campaigns regarding the disease throughout the province, making extensive use of various media platforms.

"The movement control of animals will remain in place together with disease surveillance across the province to detect any infections timeously."

KaMadlopha-Mthethwa's budget came days after the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) briefed the parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Agriculture.

The ARC identified securing funding for the new FMD Vaccine Facility as an ongoing challenge, and efforts to obtain the necessary funds remain a top priority.

Responding to the budget, DA KZN Spokesperson on Agriculture and Rural Development Sakhile Mngadi commended achievements during the past financial year but said infrastructure rollout remains weak.