

# Vigilance in containing FMD critical for red meat export growth

By  Paul Makube

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The issue of lapses in biosecurity in livestock production has been on the ascendancy globally in recent years with periodic outbreaks of major diseases such as Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), and African Swine Fever (ASF).



Source: [Freepik](#)

A few years ago, China had a massive outbreak of ASF which decimated the country's breeding herd with over 2 million pigs culled. Recently, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) indicated that they are investigating a strange phenomenon where HPAI, a predominantly poultry disease, was in dairy cattle in various areas in the US.



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South Africa had its fair share of biosecurity lapses with outbreaks of all these diseases that had a devastating impact on both producers and the country in terms of lost revenues and interruption of exports. Nonetheless, increased collaboration between the authorities and stakeholders in the livestock industry ensured a speedy containment and resumption of farm operations and exports.

Recently, the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) announced a new FMD outbreak on two dairy farms in Humansdorp, Eastern Cape (EC). FMD was relatively contained before this with the DALRRD's 2 May 2024 update indicating that a total of 9 outbreaks occurred since 2019 of which 4 have been resolved and closed with the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH) while 5 remained open.

A big concern for the livestock value chain as FMD outbreaks persist



## Containment measures and impact

On a positive note, this seems to be an isolated case as no spread yet to animals in neighbouring farms and communal areas after they tested negative. Biosecurity measures have subsequently been heightened with the affected farms quarantined, and the immediate neighbouring farms and areas placed under precautionary quarantine as further investigations continued to determine their FMD status.

The only impact will be where local auctions are suspected thus impacting negatively on cashflows if they had planned to sell animals during this period. Otherwise, no impact on meat and wool exports so far which is good news.

Extreme vigilance in biosecurity is critical for the country to continue to grow its exports of meat and wool. We recently saw the reopening of the Saudi Arabian market after a long FMD-induced hiatus as well as China and the disease's containment will ensure continued market access.

## ABOUT PAUL MAKUBE

Paul Makube is Senior Agricultural Economist at FNB.

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