



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, WATER AND FORESTRY

2 JULY 2015

RESPONSE TO THE QUESTIONS RAISED BY HONORABLE VIPUAKUJE MUHARUKUA (MP)

BACKGROUND

Following the outbreak of foot and mouth disease (FMD) in Ohangwena on the 11th May 2015, the whole of the northern communal areas (NCA) was declared a Control Area in terms of Section 19 of the Animal Health Act 1 of 2011. This gave veterinary officials powers to enforce stricter measures in order to curb further spread of this disease, including restrictions on the movement of animals, animal products and other potentially infectious materials.

These measures were announced publicly through various media and people were requested to cooperate accordingly because the country stands to lose billions of dollars if the beef industry collapses due to FMD. It is therefore important that veterinary officials and all other stakeholders do everything within the law in order to safeguard this important industry. It is therefore of paramount importance that all Namibians are aware of the high stakes involved in the control of this disease.

It is against this background that I wish to respond to the specific questions by Honourable Muharukua as follows:

1. The 15 cattle that were killed tested for FMD and we are awaiting confirmatory results from the World Animal Health Organisation (OIE) reference laboratories. It should be noted that the animals also carry a risk for Lung sickness since the areas south of the Veterinary Cordon Fence (VCF) are free of this disease whilst cattle north of the fence are not free and as a result get vaccinated, annually, against Lung sickness. Unfortunately, there is no definitive test for Lung sickness in the live animal because the organs (lung and lymph nodes) are required to culture the organism. The animals are, therefore, killed to harvest the organs for confirmatory testing.
2. High elephants activities as well as cases of vandalism in the mentioned area west of Etosha makes maintenance of the Veterinary Cordon Fence (VCF)

extremely challenging. However, this does not absolve the livestock owners from their responsibilities of making sure that their livestock do not, illegally or stray, cross the VCF in contravention of movement restrictions imposed under Section 19 of the Animal Health Act, more so when the whole NCA is under threat from FMD.

3. Section 16 of the Animal Health Act empowers veterinary officials to destroy, without compensation [Section 30 (2) (a)], any animal which is suspected of having been in contact with an infected animal and has been found in contravention of the said Act. Simply put, animal found crossing the VCF fall under this category regardless of whether or not they test positive for FMD or Lung sickness; and yes, veterinary officials will continue to destroy any animal that will be found to have crossed the VCF illegally as per Section 16 of the Act. The law is the law and it should be followed by all. In the case of Lung sickness there are no reliable laboratory tests in Namibia or abroad that can be used to determine the disease status of an animal. Therefore, Livestock owners should take responsibility for their animals if we are to curb the spread of FMD to the rest of the NCA and the FMD Free Zone.
4. A fence was erected on the Namibia-Angola Border immediately after independence, and the purpose thereof was to prevent the situation we find ourselves in as far as FMD is concerned. However, that fence was vandalised and destroyed in no time because the people continue grazing their cattle in Angola. It was, therefore, not negligence on the part of government but pure resistance to the presence of a fence by the people at that time. This FMD outbreak in the NCA is a sure reminder of the importance of safeguarding our borders and therefore protecting ours cattle against FMD and other trans-boundary animal diseases.
5. Elephants, unlike cattle or other cloven- hoofed animals are not susceptible to FMD. They are therefore, in themselves, not a direct risk with regard to FMD transmission. However, elephants do pose an indirect risk, as alluded to earlier, through their damage to the VCF. In this regard more teams have been deployed on the ground in order to repair the areas of the VCF which are under constant threat from elephants.