



# agriculture, forestry & fisheries

Department:  
Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

25 MARCH 2020

## **COVID-19 CONTINGENCY PLAN FOR ANIMAL PRODUCTION AND VETERINARY SERVICES FOR THE DURATION OF THE LOCKDOWN – 26<sup>TH</sup> MARCH – 16<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2020**

### **1. BACKGROUND**

The President of the Republic of South Africa has, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020, announced additional measures to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. In support of the announcement, the Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development subsequently announced how these measures will affect the agricultural industry. The President has directed that the country will be placed on lockdown with effect from midnight on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> March until midnight on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> April 2020.

Companies that are essential to the production and transportation of food, basic goods and medical supplies will remain open. This category includes abattoirs and food processing facilities. The provision of veterinary services has also been pronounced as an essential service by the Minister of Agriculture, Land reform and Rural development.

The new control measures, as announced by the President and the Minister, are in addition to all applicable control measures as have been previously announced. These include the observance of hygienic principles such as frequent washing of hands with soap and water, avoiding touching of hands, social distancing and limiting unnecessary movements.

### **2. CONTROL MEASURES**

In line with the directive by the President and the Minister, the following activities, both in the public and private sector, where applicable, are regarded as essential and will continue to operate:

- Primary animal production for the production of meat, eggs, milk, farmed fish and honey at farms, feedlots and communal settings
- Animal diseases control
- Diagnostic services for animal diseases and food safety

- The slaughter of animals at approved abattoirs
- Primary and further processing of food of animal origin
- Emergency veterinary services
- Animal welfare provisions and monitoring
- Import and export facilitation for food of animal production and pets
- Regulatory veterinary public health
- Manufacturing, wholesaling, sale, and distribution of animal production and veterinary supplies
- Law enforcement

The activities as listed above are hereby described hereunder in details:

**(1) Primary animal production for the production of meat, eggs, milk, farmed fish and honey at farms, feedlots and communal settings**

All primary animal production facilities (including farms, feedlots and communal farming arrangements) for production of meat, dairy, eggs, honey, farmed fish are essential and must continue to operate. This provision also permits operations for support services such as the transportation of raw material and animals to, from and in-between production facilities for the purpose of food security

Distribution of semen for dairy cattle from suppliers to dairy farms and movement of animals for breeding purposes is essential to ensure that the breeding cycles are not interrupted.

**(2) Animal diseases control**

Control of selected controlled animal diseases will continue during the lockdown. The diseases that have been determined by the Director of Animal Health, authorised under the Animal Diseases Act, 1984 (Act No. 35 of 1984) as to be controlled as part of the essential service for the duration of the lockdown are Foot and Mouth Disease, African Swine Fever, Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza and Rabies. The Director may amend the list as and when the situation dictates.

**(3) Diagnostic services for animal diseases and food safety**

Diagnostic services support the performance of veterinary services in determining the causes of diseases and therefore advising on the relevant therapeutic and preventive

interventions. Veterinary diagnostics laboratories for animal diseases and food safety are required to continue the services required to support the activities that have been declared as essential. The services to be provided during the lockdown period exclude services that are not related to supporting diagnostic services that support essential therapeutic, preventive and control measures as described elsewhere in the document.

#### **(4) The slaughter of animals at approved abattoirs**

Abattoirs are a central part of the food chain and are therefore regarded as critical in ensuring food security for the country. These facilities are therefore regarded as an essential service. All services that support the functioning of abattoirs are also permitted to operate. These include the delivery of raw materials, removal of waste, by-products and condemned material, removal of skins and hides (in case where the abattoir do not have adequate storage space), distribution of products to storage facilities, wholesalers and retailers and transportation to export facilities, in line with all other provisions under the lockdown.

#### **(5) Primary and further processing of food of animal origin**

Along the food chain, commodities such as meat and milk are also processed into various products such as minced meat, sausages, polonies, cheese, yoghurt, etc. The facilities that process these products are essential to ensure the continuous supply of animal protein during the lockdown. It is therefore critical that such facilities remain open and operational during this period.

#### **(6) Emergency veterinary services**

In order to ensure that animals, as sentient beings, are taken care of, provision of essential emergency veterinary services is critical for the duration of the lockdown. Emergency veterinary services are to be limited to emergency medical and surgical procedures that cannot be suspended, and includes diagnostics and treatment of sick animals. All veterinary services that can be suspended and rescheduled until after the lifting of the lockdown are excluded from being regarded as essential veterinary services.

The criteria for the veterinary and para-veterinary professional to determine the inclusion or exclusion into this category is to determine whether the delay in providing veterinary intervention until the lifting of the lockdown will compromise the health and welfare of the animal and the public. Veterinary services that are not regarded as essential for the duration of the lockdown include routine services such as vaccinations, general routine check-ups, spays and other elective medical and surgical procedures.

### **(7) Animal welfare provisions and monitoring**

In all aspects of farming with and owning animals, animal welfare is of paramount significance. All animals must be handled and treated humanely. This includes the handling of animals on farms, feedlots, homes, abattoirs, during transportation and anywhere else. It is required that any owner or person under whose care an animal is, must ensure that such an animal is provided with the essential provisions such as feed, water, shelter and a clean environment. All places that keep animals are expected to provide the necessary animal welfare service throughout the duration of the lockdown.

The enforcement of the animal welfare requirements under the Animals Protection Act, 1962 (Act No. 71 of 1962), as amended, and the Performing Animals Protection Act, 1935 (Act 24 of 1935), as amended, is declared as essential for the period of the lockdown. This therefore means that all officials and other individuals authorized to enforce the listed Acts will be expected to be providing the necessary enforcement service during the lockdown.

### **(8) Import and export facilitation for food of animal production and pets**

Import and export facilitation support the supply and distribution of essential commodities to maintain lives and ensure food security. The provision of import and export facilitation by veterinary services (both public and private) during the lockdown period is to be limited to facilitation for food of animal origin, feed for food-producing animals, live food-producing animals, facilitation for welfare purposes, and pets accompanying people to be evacuated.

### **(9) Regulatory veterinary public health**

Veterinary public health relates to the provision of veterinary services to safeguard human health. This includes control of zoonotic diseases to ensure that diseases that are inter-transmissible between animals and human beings are controlled. The provision of a veterinary public health service also covers the monitoring of the slaughter of animals and primary processing of meat at abattoirs and cutting and processing plants.

Government veterinary public health services for the monitoring of facilities registered under the Meat Safety Act, 2000 (Act No. 40 of 2000) are therefore regarded as essential services for the duration of the lockdown. The services of independent meat inspection assignees at abattoirs and other facilities as stipulated in the meat inspection scheme are also declared as essential.

### **(10) Manufacturing, wholesaling, sale, and distribution of animal production , food packaging and veterinary supplies**

In order to support the production and welfare of animals and food, and the delivery of an essential veterinary service, a constant and reliable supply of input materials is critical. This refers to supplies such as veterinary medicines, clinical and surgical materials, and animal feed, packaging material, etc. The manufacturing, wholesaling, sale and distribution of the supplies for the period of the lockdown is limited to those supplies that are essential to support all operations that have been declared as essential.

### **(11) Law enforcement**

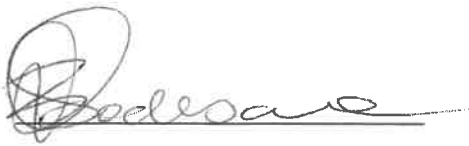
Operations such as investigations and prosecution for contraventions of the provisions of all applicable legislative tools are declared as essential. These include contraventions of the Animal Diseases Act, 1984, the Meat Safety Act, 2000, the Animals Protection Act, 1962, The Performing Animals Protection Act, 1935, the Animals Improvement Act, 1998, The Veterinary and Para-veterinary Professions Act, 1982, and the Fertilizers, Farm Feeds, Agricultural Remedies and Stock Remedies Act, 1947.

## **3. SCALING DOWN OF ACTIVITIES**

In line with the directive of the President of the Republic, the maximum number of people permitted to gather at the same place is limited to a maximum of 100 persons, and these need to maintain, as best as possible, a metre distance between them. It is also essential that in order to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, all necessary measures to reduce the possibility of transmission of the virus from one person to another are implemented by all.

It is therefore important that all non-essential services, whether they are in a facility that is regarded as essential or not, must be suspended for the duration of the lockdown. It is expected of facility owners and managers to limit the number of persons that are at work and only allow the minimum number that is critical to ensure that production and services are delivered.

In relation to abattoirs, cutting plants and processing facilities registered under the Meat Safety Act, 2000, the owners of such facilities must submit to the Provincial Executive Officer (PEO) the plans to limit the number of persons working at the same place and time in line with the directive of the President and general provisions to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.



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