



REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

MINISTRY OF LANDS AND AGRICULTURE

**STATEMENT ON FOOT AND MOUTH
DISEASE**

**BY THE MINISTER OF LANDS AND
AGRICULTURE**

HON. DR. EDWIN G. DIKOLOTI

**ON THE FOOT-AND-MOUTH DISEASE
(FMD) SITUATION, IMPACT ON
LIVELIHOODS,
THE WIDER ECONOMY, AND ONGOING
CONTROL EFFORTS**

DATE: 11 AUGUST 2026

1. **Mr Speaker, Honorable Members,** I stand before this August House today to address you on a matter that touches the very heartbeat of our nation: the health, security, and prosperity of our national cattle herd, which is the bedrock of our rural livelihoods and national heritage.
2. In the course of 2026, our nation faced a formidable challenge, recording four Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) SAT1 outbreaks across Zone 6b (North East), Zone 3c-Maitengwe (North East), Zone 11 (Goodhope/Borolong, Southern, Gamalete), and Zone 13 (Kgalagadi).
3. I am pleased to report that the emergency mass vaccination programme has successfully suppressed the outbreaks in Zones 3c-Maitengwe and 6b in the North East District.
4. Both outbreak events have now been formally closed with the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH). This is a significant milestone and demonstrates that determined, science-based interventions can turn the tide against FMD. Vaccination will, however, continue in these areas to maintain strong herd immunity and provide an additional shield against possible transboundary introduction of the virus.
5. To ensure this victory remains absolute, targeted vaccination continues in order to fortify herd immunity against transboundary threats. Having gathered robust epidemiological evidence, we are preparing a comprehensive dossier for WOAH to grant these zones official "FMD Free-With-Vaccination" status, which is a critical milestone that will reopen global corridors for our livestock and animal products.
6. In the southern parts of the country, specifically **Zones 11 and 13**, active FMD transmission remains localised, primarily affecting specific areas along the Botswana-South Africa border.
7. In Zone 11, transmission is concentrated mainly around **Phitshane-Molopo and Tshidilamolomo**, while in Zone 13, some ranches, particularly the **Banyana farms**, remain affected.

8. The situation in these areas is responding positively to the strategic vaccination campaigns being implemented across high-risk crushes. These vaccination rounds are designed to rapidly build herd immunity and create an increasingly effective biological barrier against further transmission.
9. Government remains seized with the situation and continues to intensify surveillance, vaccination and other disease-control interventions in the affected.
10. **Mr Speaker**, Biosecurity is our first line of defence. Every unnecessary animal movement, every breach of a veterinary cordon and every failure to observe prescribed movement controls creates an opportunity for the virus to travel.
11. Strong biosecurity measures are therefore, indispensable to containing the disease, protecting rural livelihoods, safeguarding national economic stability and accelerating the restoration of Botswana's international trade status for livestock and livestock products.
12. To fast-track trade restoration, we are erecting a formidable Containment Zone (CZ) that decisively isolates affected pockets while safeguarding the disease-free status of the rest of the nation. This comprises the Southern Boundary, which spans the Botswana-Republic of South Africa border from Sakutswane Lands (Ramotswa/Otse) to Verda and the Northern Boundary, which spans from a strategic arc from Sakutswane Lands through Mogobane and Ranaka bypasses, traversing the Kanye and Mmathethe passes, onward through Tsoaneng and Sekutlhane to Masampa-Verda.
13. **Mr Speaker, Honourable Members**, this approximately 400-kilometer northern boundary integrates reinforced existing barriers with newly constructed fences over virgin terrain. I am pleased to inform this House that this great project will be fully completed by the end of August 2026.

14. Upon completion of the boundary fence and certification of clear population separation by the Director of Veterinary Services (DVS), we will formally inform WOAHA for international recognition of the Containment Zone. Once approved, this will immediately unlock trade for all disease-free zones outside the contained area, unleashing Botswana beef back into the global market.
15. **Honourable Members**, while full clearance is underway, we have instituted safe, highly controlled movement protocols to sustain local value chains without compromising health standards. As a result, livestock from non-outbreak areas can now be processed at designated abattoirs within Zone 11. Secondly, intensively managed livestock from BAITS-registered units are permitted for controlled slaughter at approved establishments within the Containment Zone.
16. **Mr Speaker**, we do not underestimate the profound weight this crisis has placed upon our people. We are aware that rural households have been fully disrupted. It is common cause that our farming families have borne a heavy load, as they rely on cattle for daily sustenance, school fees, and seasonal stability. Local commerce has also been heavily affected. There is no doubt that temporary closures of village butcheries and regional market stalls have dampened local cash flow.
17. We also know that a harsh convergence of FMD restrictions and an intensifying El Niño climate pattern threatens our rangelands. Further, restricted animal off-take risks overgrazing, placing heightened strain on pasture and water resources. Again because of these restrictions, uninterrupted access to premium, duty-free, quota-free international markets, like the European Union and China, has dealt a temporary blow to export revenues at the Botswana Meat Commission (BMC).
18. **Mr Speaker, Honourable Members**, fully conscious of these harsh realities, Government has activated a masterplan for full recovery, anchored on resilience, modern infrastructure, and international partnerships. These interventions include the following:

- **Whole-of-Government Mobilization:** Spearheaded by the Office of the President, a unified national emergency response brings together District Commissioners, the Botswana Defence Force (BDF), the Botswana Police Service, traditional Dikgosi, Mephato community groups, and agricultural unions for robust border patrol, fence construction, and surveillance.
- **Infrastructure Upgrades:** Beyond the recently erected 182 km fence between Mabule and Tlhareselele, we have launched a nationwide restoration effort, repairing over 1,152 km of veterinary cordon and international border fences to shield our national herd for generations to come.
- **Smart Rezoning:** Large veterinary control zones, including Zone 11, are being realigned into agile sub-units to localize future responses, minimize economic disruption, and preserve trade integrity.
- **High-Precision Mapping:** The Department of Surveys and Mapping is deploying advanced spatial surveying to map fence lines with pinpoint accuracy, strengthening animal traceability for WOAHP dossier submissions.
- **Regional Alliances:** Through the Botswana-RSA Binational Commission (BNC), we have launched a joint biosecurity plan to secure shared borders. Furthermore, Botswana is championing a SADC FMD Vaccine Antigen Bank for regional security, having already extended vaccine aid to Zimbabwe and Lesotho to neutralize boundary threats at their source.
- **Global Expertise:** In collaboration with German experts via the AU-Germany Agricultural Policy Dialogue, we are modernizing our laboratory networks, advancing small-stock health integration, and refining strategic control mechanisms.

- **Gold-Standard Traceability:** We are doubling down on our world-class BAITS system and residue monitoring labs to satisfy the most stringent global food safety standards, maintaining our competitive edge in premium markets.
 - **Unveiling "Brand Botswana Beef":** We are actively establishing a unified national beef brand. As you may all know, Botswana's traditional, natural, and grass-fed cattle-raising practices align perfectly with global demand for organic, hormone-free meat. Guided by a multi-agency team across key Ministries and trade authorities, "Brand Botswana Beef" will capture maximum value across top-tier international markets.
19. **Mr Speaker**, overcoming Foot-and-Mouth Disease requires an unyielding, whole-of-society commitment. Victory depends on the active partnership of our farmers, traditional leaders, private industry, and local communities.
 20. While we feel the urgency to ease restrictions and revitalize rural economies, we must remain disciplined. Lifting movement controls prematurely risks reigniting outbreaks, prolonging trade bans, and undermining the long-term value of our national herd. By exercising patience and adhering to science-backed protocols today, we guarantee a stronger, safer, and more prosperous agricultural sector tomorrow.
 21. I therefore, **Mr Speaker**, wish to assure Honourable Members and all Batswana and farmers alike, that we are aware that this has been too long. But we are doing everything in our power to ensure that it comes to an end. I am confident that the end is not far.
 22. I urge you all to exercise a little more patience and allow us to complete what we started. The benefits of waiting a little longer far outweigh any short cuts we may take now, instead of waiting for the finish line, which is now not far off.
 23. I thank you **Mr Speaker**.