



DAFFnews

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Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries



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Ban on gatherings of cloven-hoofed animals remains in place

Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development Minister, Ms Thoko Didiza, MP appeared before the Portfolio Committee on Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development last week to brief them on progress regarding the Foot-and-mouth disease outbreak in Molemole Municipality, Limpopo.

The Minister assured members of the committee that the veterinary services team is doing everything possible to ensure the situation does not cause any further economic harm. Since the outbreak, in November 2019, the team has followed up on over 140 properties with possible links to specific auctions and affected properties. To date 130 properties have been investigated, and precautionary quarantine notices lifted on 87 properties.

Minister Didiza further shared with members the matrix that links the two implicated auction houses to affected properties, demonstrating the complexity of this outbreak and the risk that congregations of animals of unknown health status poses. “We do not take the decision to ban all gatherings lightly and we are fully aware of the economic as well as social implications of these measures, I assure you that it is meant

to be temporary in order to curb the spread of the disease, and this remains the intention” said Minister Didiza.

The Minister further confirmed that so far, 18 positive cases have been confirmed and reported to the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE). All of these cases are in Limpopo province with links, direct and indirect, to the two identified auctions.

“I note the concerns raised by the portfolio committee on the ban on auctions and I will engage with the steering committee on Foot-and-mouth on the uplifting of the ban sooner for their consideration,” said Minister Didiza.

Minister Didiza wishes to assure all citizens that the meat and other products from FMD infected cattle is safe for human consumption and any products which are discarded from the slaughterhouse is purely to manage the disease and prevent further spread.

Consumers are therefore reminded to only buy meat from reputable outlets as it would have gone through meat inspection and certified fit for human consumption.

Moist air from tropics conducive to outbreak of certain pests

Current weather patterns in southern Africa may be conducive to the outbreak of certain insect pests. Moist air from the tropics may bring another infestation of the Fall armyworm into Limpopo, North West, Free State and Northern Cape; while the current conditions in these provinces including KwaZulu-Natal, are conducive to the outbreak of African armyworm in veld and grazing paddocks.

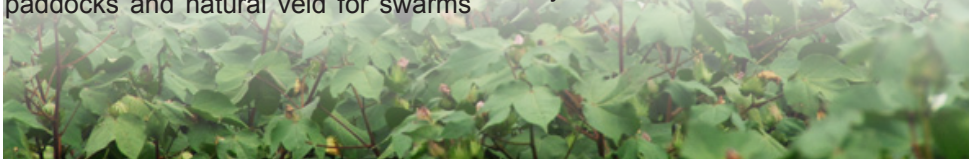
CropLife SA has been notified of massive clouds of small moths that are visible during the early evening in the northern parts of Namibia around Otjiwarongo, while a large-scale caterpillar infestation has also been reported by sunflower growers in the North West, South Africa. Although the Karoo remains extremely dry in most parts, it is possible for migratory locusts to appear, although it is unlikely at this stage.

Crop and livestock farmers should be extremely vigilant in the mentioned provinces and scout late afternoons in cash crops, fruit orchards, grazing paddocks and natural veld for swarms

of small moths as the first signs of the Lepidoptera pest outbreaks. Farmers who grow non-GM maize and cotton, as well as vegetable farmers, are very vulnerable to the Fall armyworm and need to make a special effort to scout for the pest. Scouting can be done visually in the early evening, but it is advisable to also use pheromone traps that are registered and available in South Africa.

Should a farmer suspect the presence of Fall armyworm or any other large-scale invasions of Lepidoptera pests, they are urged to take good quality, close-up photographs of the moths, caterpillars and egg parcels and send it *via* WhatsApp to +27 (0) 82 446 8946 (Dr Gerhard Verdoorn, CropLife SA) for assistance with identification.

Farmers are also encouraged to contact CropLife SA for advice on the effective control of any such large-scale outbreaks. In addition, the Resources section of CropLife SA's website www.croplife.co.za contains guidelines for managing specific pests, including Fall armyworm.



Annual migration of brown-veined white butterfly

If you are driving around South Africa, you will notice plenty of brown-veined white butterflies! It is the annual migration of the *Belenois aurota* also known as Pioneer white, African caper white and in Afrikaans: grasveldwitjie) which takes place in South Africa during midsummer every year.

During good rainy seasons, the butterfly population is bolstered by the abundance of leaves for caterpillars on host plants (Capparaceae: specific genera include; Boscia, Shepard's trees; Maerua, endemic trees of Mozambique and Capparis, Caper shrubs). These caterpillars subsequently metamorphose into butterflies.

According to Mr Johan van der Walt of Wildlife South Africa they originate in the arid regions of the Karoo and Kalahari.



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www.wildlifesouthafrica.com

In December or January they gather in their millions, when they migrate in a north-easterly direction. This mass of white butterflies probably plays an important role in pollination. People have been asked to help butterfly researchers map the migration route of millions of brown-veined white butterflies as they make their way across South Africa.

Little research has been done with regard to where exactly these butterflies fly to, but they have been noticed flying above the ocean near the Mozambique coast and Madagascar, where at the end of their journey, they most probably fall into the sea.

After a few years of migrating eastwards they will turn around and migrate back again. So the cycle continues and white butterflies take to the sky.

According to Mr Jeremy Dobson, Chairperson of the Lepidopterists' Society of Africa, the butterflies are not an agricultural pest and there is no reason for anyone to attack them.

***Belenois aurota*, also known as the Pioneer white, African caper white and in Afrikaans: grasveldwitjie.**

Chinese authorities to ban the trade of wild animals

The Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) works tirelessly across a range of projects to build capacity to combat illegal trade. “We do this to achieve our conservation mission and to support an environment that sustains healthy wildlife and people. We therefore welcome the decision by Chinese authorities to ban the trade of wild animals and we call for the government to make this a permanent rather than temporary ban,” said Annie Du Pre-Reynolds, Wildlife in Trade Programme Manager, EWT.

China’s ban aims to block the spread of the Coronavirus, which by 29 January had claimed the lives of at least 132 people. At this time, no wildlife can be sold in or moved between markets, including online ones. The EWT recognises that international trade in wildlife has been linked to disease transmission across the globe. Illegal markets threaten endangered species and lead to overexploitation of natural resources. Of particular concern is the spread of contagious diseases between animals in wildlife markets and humans who come into contact with them. Illegal wildlife markets are, therefore, not only a conservation and welfare issue, but a public health issue. The Chinese Centre for Disease Control

and Prevention tested 585 samples of wildlife specimens present at the Wuhan’s Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market during the course of January and found 33 of these samples contained the Coronavirus. In this market, as in so many throughout China, customers could purchase carcasses and live animals from local and international origins. African animals such as crocodiles and pangolins, are also on offer.

Disease is not the only danger consumers face from wildlife products. In Africa, many of the animals that end up in the trade chain are killed using highly toxic pesticides. Residues of these poisons have been detected in animal parts from vultures, leopards and a range of other species. The EWT works to create awareness of this public health threat to local and international consumers, but this effort must be supported by governments and organisations in the relevant countries, including China.

The closest China has come to closing its wildlife markets was in 2003, following the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome outbreak that killed almost 800 people. This effort dissipated months later and regulation remained unchanged.



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