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MEDIA STATEMENT

25 November 2021

THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, LAND REFORM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT REMAINS COMMITTED TO THE SAFETY OF THE EQUINE POPULATION DESPITE THE SHORTAGE OF THE AFRICAN HORSE SICKNESS VACCINE (AHS)

The Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development has been made aware by the Onderstepoort Biological Products (OBP) regarding the shortage and unavailability of the OBP African horse sickness (AHS) vaccine.

The current unavailability of AHS vaccine at this time will have implications with regards to the management of vaccination protocols, and we are aware that it may have been impossible for some horses to be vaccinated as required within the time period prior to 31 October.

The department welcomes the assurance given by OBP that contingency plans are being implemented and closely monitored to ensure that production outputs meet the demand and the assurance to the Equine Industry that all efforts are being made to ensure that the vaccine is available early in December 2021.

Please take note of the following instructions in this regard:

AHS is a controlled animal disease in terms of the Animal Diseases Act, 1984 (Act no 35 of 84). Vaccination against AHS must be performed according to the requirements summarized in the table below:

AHS Zone	Vaccination
AHS Free Zone	Not allowed without written permission from SV Boland. Permission for vaccination will only be given from 1 June to 31 October each year. Both bottles of vaccine, i.e. bottle 1 and bottle 2, must be administered between 1 June and 31 October.



AHS Surveillance Zone	Not allowed without written permission from SV Boland. Permission for vaccination will only be given from 1 June 31 October each year. Both bottles of vaccine must be administered between 1 June and 31 October.
AHS Protection zone	All equines in this area must be vaccinated within the period of 1 June to 31 October each year. Both bottles of vaccine i.e. bottle 1 and bottle 2, must be administered between 1 June and 31 October
AHS Infected Zone	Strong recommendation is made to vaccinate during the period from 1 June to 31 October each year

Please consult the *Veterinary Procedural Notice for African horse sickness control (AHS VPN)*, *Important Information Regarding Vaccination against African Horse Sickness (AHS) In South Africa* and the Animal Disease Regulations R2026 of 1986 on the DALRRD website for more information.

AHS controlled area

In contrast to the AHS infected zone, in the AHS controlled area, AHS infection pressure is much lower. However, *Culicoides* midges are still present in this area and in the AHS controlled area, midge transmission of vaccine virus appears to be a greater risk to the resident equines during the period 1 November to 31 May than outbreaks of field virus.

Accordingly, the last date for AHS vaccination with either AHS bottle 1 or bottle 2 in the AHS controlled area for 2021 remains 31 October 2021 for all equines in the AHS free zone, AHS surveillance zone and AHS protection zone.

We remind the public that it is an offence to vaccinate their horses in the AHS controlled area after 31 October 2021, unless written exemption has been granted to do so by the national Director: Animal Health. Individual written and motivated applications for permission to vaccinate outside of the legal window period, under appropriate and strict vector protected conditions may be considered. Please contact vaccinate@myhorse.org.za for more information on this protocol if required.

AHS infected zone

In the AHS infected zone, vaccination in the low vector period from 1 June to 31 October is recommended but not compulsory, in order to accommodate variances in local infection pressure and the higher risk of infection with field virus. This means that equines in the AHS



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 Mhasho wa zwa Vhu- limi, Mbuedzedzo ya Mavu na Mveledzisoya Mahayani uMnyango Wezolimo, Izinguquko Kwezomhlaba
 Nokuthukiswa Kwezindawo Zasemakhaya Ndzawulo ya Vurimi, Antswiso wa Misava na Nhluvukiso wa Matikoxikaya Litiko
 Letekulima, Tingucuko Kutemhlaba Nekutufukiswa Kwetindzawo Tasemaphandleni UmNyango wezokuLima, ukuBuyiselwa kweNarha
 nokuThuthukiswa kweeNdawo zemaKhaya Kgoro ya Terno, Peakanyoleswa ya Naga le Tlhabollo ya Dinaga- magae Lefapha la
 Temothuo, Kabobotjha ya Naha le Tlhabollo ya Dibaka tsa Mahae Lefapha la Temothuo, Pusetso dinaga le Tlhabollo ya Metsemagae
 ISebe lezoLimo, uBuyekezo lwemiHlaba noPhuhliso lamaPhandle

infected zone may be vaccinated outside of the period 1 June to 31 October, without written exemption from the national Director: Animal Health at DALRRD.

We urge equine owners and managers in the AHS infected zone to consult with their veterinarians regarding vaccination after 31 October 2021. We also urge all responsible persons to consider shielding equines vaccinated after 31 October 2021 from *Culicoides* midges through the appropriate use of stabling and turn out times, screening over stable openings as applicable, and the responsible use of insecticides and insect repellents registered in terms of the Fertilizers, Farm Feeds, Agricultural Remedies and Stock Remedies Act, 1947 (Act No. 36 of 1947).

We suggest that equine owners and managers make contact with their sporting bodies and registering authorities to request that their horses be allowed to compete without having being vaccinated in 2021 due to the shortage.

The OBP African horse sickness vaccine is the only AHS vaccine registered for use in South Africa in terms of the Fertilizers, Farm Feeds, Agricultural Remedies and Stock Remedies Act, 1947 (Act No. 36 of 1947) and remains the only currently approved AHS vaccine in South Africa. The use of unregistered products is against the law and is strongly discouraged, regardless of their claimed properties, as the safety and efficacy of unregistered products has not been assessed in equines by the mandated Registrar of Act 36.

The department also concurs with OBP that the apprehension caused in the market as a result of its product unavailability is regrettable, but we wish to assure all stakeholders that we remain committed in supporting and “securing the safety of the Equine population”

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Issued by the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development:

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