

ENVIRONMENT

No evidence of Rift Valley fever among livestock, authorities say

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The Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development said Friday there is no evidence of an outbreak of Rift Valley fever in the country.

This follows an investigation by provincial veterinarians at Kimberley in the Northern Cape after a test result for the deadly virus was received from a laboratory.

Reggie Ngcobo, spokesperson for the department, warned that the livestock industry must remain vigilant regarding possible cases of Rift Valley fever among sheep, goats and cattle.

Rift Valley fever is transmitted by mosquitoes to humans and animals when mosquito eggs hatch in large volumes of standing water. The disease usually breaks out at the end of a heavy rainy season.

"Farmers are reminded that results from a laboratory alone are not sufficient to confirm a diagnosis. The clinical signs and history must also be taken into account to confirm the disease," said Ngcobo.

Farmers need to give their cattle, sheep and goats a vaccine against the disease to protect themselves and their livestock.

"It still remains the responsibility of farmers to vaccinate their livestock against Rift Valley fever to prevent an outbreak that could cause large-scale deaths, and lead to significant monetary losses.

"The department asks people not to spread rumors about Rift Valley fever and rather to ensure that any suspicion that the disease occurs is immediately reported to the nearest state veterinarian or the department," Ngcobo said.

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