

Overview of Foot and Mouth Disease Outbreak in Eswatini

Eswatini has been experiencing a significant outbreak of Foot-and-mouth disease since May 2025, and the disease continued to spread into 2026. The outbreak has affected cattle and pigs, prompting extensive livestock movement controls and international trade restrictions.

Key developments include:

- The first laboratory-confirmed outbreak was reported in the Shiselweni Region in May 2025. The virus strains identified include SAT1 and SAT2, which are common in southern Africa.
- By early 2026, veterinary authorities had reported dozens of outbreaks across most parts of the country, leading to the suspension of livestock sales and movement in affected areas.
- As of late February 2026, more than 60 SAT2 outbreaks had been officially reported, affecting over 50,000 susceptible cattle and pigs, with additional SAT1 outbreaks also under investigation.
- Following the outbreak, World Organisation for Animal Health suspended Eswatini's status as a country free from FMD without vaccination, resulting in restrictions on exports of beef and other susceptible animal products.

What is Foot-and-Mouth Disease?

FMD is a highly contagious viral disease of cloven-hoofed animals, including:

- Cattle
- Pigs
- Sheep
- Goats
- Buffalo and certain wildlife

It is not considered a public health threat. Human infection is extremely rare and generally mild. The greatest impact is on livestock production and international trade.

Common signs in livestock

- Fever
- Blisters in the mouth, on the tongue, and around the feet
- Excessive drooling
- Lameness
- Reduced milk production
- Loss of appetite

Control measures

Authorities in Eswatini have implemented:

- Restrictions on animal movement.

- Surveillance and laboratory testing.
- Vaccination in affected areas.
- Public awareness campaigns for farmers.
- Enhanced border and biosecurity measures.

To help prevent the spread of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) in Eswatini, farmers play a critical role in protecting their livestock and supporting national disease control efforts. FMD is a highly contagious viral disease that affects cloven-hoofed animals such as cattle, goats, sheep, and pigs. Current control measures in Eswatini include movement restrictions, vaccination in designated areas, surveillance, and strengthened biosecurity.

Guidance for Farmers

- Do not move livestock into or out of your farm unless you have permission from veterinary authorities. Follow all movement restrictions and checkpoint requirements.
- Isolate sick animals immediately. Keep animals showing signs of FMD away from healthy stock.
- Watch for signs of FMD, including:
 - Excessive drooling or salivation
 - Blisters or sores in the mouth, on the tongue, or around the feet
 - Lameness or reluctance to walk
 - Fever
 - Reduced milk production
- Report suspected cases immediately to your nearest veterinary office or livestock extension officer. Early reporting helps prevent wider spread.
- Limit visitors and vehicles entering your farm. Only allow essential personnel, and ensure they follow biosecurity measures.
- Disinfect equipment, vehicles, footwear, and clothing before entering and leaving livestock areas.
- Avoid sharing equipment such as ropes, trailers, feeding troughs, and water containers with other farms unless they have been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.
- Keep newly purchased or returning animals in quarantine for at least 14 days before mixing them with the rest of the herd.
- Prevent contact with neighbouring livestock and wild cloven-hoofed animals by maintaining secure fencing where possible.
- Participate in government vaccination programmes when your area is scheduled for vaccination and follow veterinary advice on booster doses and animal identification.
- Maintain good farm records, including animal movements, purchases, sales, and any illness, to assist veterinary investigations if needed.

What Farmers Should Not Do

- Do not sell, slaughter, or transport animals that show signs of FMD.
- Do not hide or fail to report suspected cases.
- Do not ignore government movement restrictions, even if animals appear healthy.

Why These Measures Matter

FMD spreads rapidly through direct contact between animals and indirectly through contaminated equipment, vehicles, clothing, feed, and animal products. Strong farm biosecurity, prompt reporting, and compliance with veterinary regulations are essential to protecting livestock, reducing economic losses, and helping Eswatini regain and maintain disease-free status.

As of the latest available updates, Eswatini has partially relaxed some Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) livestock movement restrictions, but controls remain in place depending on the region and disease status.

The current situation by region is:

Region	Current movement status
Hhohho Region	Lowest risk. This region has remained free of FMD and movement is less restricted, subject to veterinary requirements.
Manzini Region	Restrictions remain in affected areas. Movement of cattle, pigs and other cloven-hoofed animals requires veterinary authorization.
Lubombo Region	Restrictions remain where outbreaks have occurred. Checkpoints and permits continue to regulate livestock movement.
Shiselweni Region	Highest level of controls. This was the original outbreak area, and movement restrictions remain strict in infected zones.

Current control measures include:

- Veterinary permits are required for movement of cattle, goats, sheep and pigs from regulated areas.
- Disease-control checkpoints remain on major livestock routes.
- Vaccination campaigns continue in affected areas.
- Movement of animals and animal products from infected zones is still restricted to prevent further spread.

If you need to move livestock, the safest approach is to first obtain clearance from the nearest veterinary office because restrictions can vary by dip tank, chiefdom, or constituency, not just by region.