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## **FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE OUTBREAK IN ZIMBABWE**

**JUNE 2015**

### ***A NATIONAL CRISIS/EMERGENCY***

**Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) is the most contagious disease known to cattle. It is a trans-boundary animal disease caused by a virus and affects all cloven hoofed animals. It is highly infectious and spreads exceedingly rapidly in cattle and pigs. Infected animals develop sores in the mouth, between the claws of the hoof (inter-digital space) and on the udder of lactating cows. Salivation and lameness are typical symptoms of infection. The disease causes severe losses in reproduction, lactation, growth and draft power output and is catastrophic if it occurs in pigs or dairy animals as they have to be destroyed. When the disease has been confirmed, the Department has an obligation to report to the whole world through the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) and of course to our neighbouring countries and stakeholders.**

**Buffalo are carriers of the virus although they themselves show no symptoms of the disease. The disease is spread from buffalo to cattle once these animals come into close contact with each other. It has also been proven that although cattle generally recover from the disease, they can remain carriers of the virus for up to 4 years without showing symptoms. These animals are therefore potential sources of infection for future outbreaks.**

**Preventing the contact of infected animals with non-infected animals is fundamental in controlling the spread of the disease. This can be achieved by a complete ban on animal movements until infected areas are identified and isolated. It is important that no animal movements occur without veterinary authority, as the disease cannot be controlled without strict monitoring and movement control.**

**Control is also facilitated by vaccination that can prevent animals contracting the disease.**

**It is important that Zimbabwe rapidly prevents this outbreak from further spreading in order to protect our livestock industry. Cooperation and assistance is required from everyone in overcoming this national crisis.**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J Nyika', with a long, sweeping flourish extending upwards and to the right.

**Dr J Nyika**  
**DIRECTOR OF VETERINARY SERVICES**