



Livestock & Meat Advisory Council

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Livestock Zimbabwe Update: 4th May 2018

OVERVIEW

The poultry industry is on high alert following the re-emergence of Avian Influenza (AI) in North West Province, South Africa and the Department of Veterinary Services (DVS) has stepped up AI surveillance in Beitbridge. DVS is also alerting farmers to the re-occurrence of this highly contagious poultry disease and the importance of biosecurity to protect farmer livelihoods and Zimbabwe's largest livestock industry.

Poultry producers are advised to be vigilant and practice stringent biosecurity. Pigs are also susceptible to the H5 N8 strain of AI, which can also spread rapidly through pig units and cause high mortalities.

At the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair this week, the first group of 200 heifers to be distributed under the Command Livestock Programme was handed over to cattle farmers in Matabeleland North and South. This follows the launch of the \$300 million Command Livestock, Fisheries and Wildlife Programme in Nsiza, Matabeleland South, in February.

Distribution of heifers under Command Livestock introduces new breeding animals with strong genetics into smallholder agriculture, to boost national beef production for food security and economic growth. At the handover ceremony, the importance of good veld management in sustainable commercial beef production was highlighted. Command Livestock is providing heifers to farmers in all provinces, on a cost recovery basis.

Council Meeting of the Zimbabwe Poultry Association

Following new AI outbreaks in South Africa, DVS has once again stepped up AI surveillance and is also collecting samples from indigenous chickens for AI screening.

Poultry producers should be aware that AI is easily transmitted in a number of ways. Vehicles, inputs brought onto a poultry site, even personnel managing poultry – and visitors – can all act as 'formites' and transmit AI, carried from an infected source.

The drawing up of an AI Strategy Plan for Zimbabwe, under a Food and Agriculture Organisation project, is continuing, as AI is now categorised globally as 'increasingly unpredictable'.

The veterinary report to the meeting also highlighted a high incidence of stunting and runting in small-scale production, attributed to poor brooding conditions, inadequate biosecurity and overreliance on one disinfectant.

DVS is advising producers to rotate different disinfectants, to safeguard against poultry developing resistance.

With reference to the availability of raw materials and feed supply, the market shortage of soya was noted and the need to stimulate local production of soya beans was highlighted.

Schedule of forthcoming meetings and events:

May 10th Pig Producers' Association of Zimbabwe Open Meeting

May 16th Open Meeting of the Zimbabwe Association of Abattoirs

May 18th Council Meeting of the Zimbabwe Fish Producers Association

May 22nd Executive Meeting of the Zimbabwe Herd Book

May 23rd Council Meeting of the Stockfeed Manufacturers Association