

# NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY

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Dear clients,

We hope you are well! It is already time for the second newsletter of the year! In this edition, we look at the story behind the Latin name of the springbuck. We also explain how joining our regional WhatsApp groups can benefit you. With the FMD crisis in South Africa, it is crucial that free-roaming cattle and other livestock are reported and controlled, so let's all remain vigilant and send proof to your vet. Finally, we give an update on the latest FMD situation in South Africa and Botswana, and explain why vaccination in our free-zone must be avoided. Kind regards, the Wildlife Vets Namibia team

## ITS ALL IN THE NAME!

A species we all know well in Namibia, the Springbuck! This gracious antelope is found all over Namibia, and is a master of survival in the harsh arid climates of our country. We can write many pages about all the different interesting adaptations that springbuck have, but this time we would like to focus on the name of the springbuck. It is a very well chosen name!

The name springbuck, or springbok, comes from the Afrikaans and Dutch language. 'Spring' means to jump, and 'bok' means buck or antelope. This literal meaning describes the springbuck perfectly; jumping buck, after the animal's famous pronking behaviour where it leaps high up in the air. Besides the Afrikaans/English name, the Latin name is also interesting and very descriptive.

The Latin name of the springbuck is *Antidorcas marsupialis*.

*Antidorcas* comes from the Greek language, whereby *anti* means 'opposite or different', and *Dorcas* means gazelle. Gazelles are a subclass of antelope, and the *Antidorcas* basically means the springbuck is not a gazelle. The springbuck may look like a gazelle, but it belongs to its own genus - *Antidorcas*.

*Marsupialis* might make you think of Australia's marsupials, who are known for their pouches to carry their young. Indeed, the Latin word *marsupium* means 'pouch'. But in the case of the springbuck, this pouch is very different.

The pouch refers to a special fold of skin alongside the back. The fold runs along the midline of the back, starting just above the tail. When springbuck start pronking, sometimes the pouch opens, and a crest of white hairs stand up and become visible. In this dorsal crest are also glands that secrete a sweet smell, a bit like vanilla. Scientists do not yet fully understand all the functions of the pouch and the display, but it likely has something to do with predator deterrence; when the springbuck is chased by predators, the sudden white flash of hairs might confuse the predator. It also likely has something to do with social communication, such as a visual warning to other springbucks (alarm), excitement or showing off their fitness to other springbucks.

The pouch is such a defining characteristics in springbuck, it was even highlighted in their scientific name!



An immobilized springbuck showing off its dorsal crest! © M. Bijsterbosch

Read more about the differences between gazelles and antelopes in our [October 2023 newsletter](#).

# REGIONAL WHATSAPP GROUPS

Are you a member of our regional WhatsApp groups? Last year we did not make much use of it, simply because we did not have much time to squeeze in other work! But, we wanted to let you know that the groups are still active, and we will use them to notify you when we are in the area (unless we already have other obligations and cannot stay longer in an area).

For those who do not know the groups, when we are called out to a certain area, we will notify the particular group. If you happen to have a job that needs to be done, you can jump in and save on kilometre fees. These groups will only be used to notify that we will be working in a specific area. To respect your privacy, we won't mention names or farms, just the area where we will be working in.

If you want us to come over, or have a question, please contact us directly and do not use these groups. We are sure you agree that there are already too many 'chat'-groups taking up our time 😊

We have created groups for the following regions:

- 🐾 North of Windhoek (e.g., Okahandja/Otjiwarongo/ Outjo/ Tsumeb/Grootfontein etc. area)
- 🐾 East of Windhoek (e.g., Omitara/Witvlei/Gobabis etc. area)
- 🐾 South-east of Windhoek (e.g., Dordabis/Nina etc. area)
- 🐾 South of Windhoek (Rehoboth and further south)



**Wildlife Vets Namibia**  
**WhatsApp groups**

Join our regional WhatsApp groups!  
How does it work?

When we are called out to a farm, or have a prospective job in an area, we notify the group.  
If you happen to have a job that needs to be done and you want us to come, call us, or send a message.

Save km, Save \$\$  
The more farms that join in on one trip, the cheaper the travel cost for all!

**Our regional groups are:**

- North of Windhoek
- East of Windhoek
- South-east of Windhoek
- South of Windhoek



 Are you a farmer/farm manager, and you want to be added to one of the regional groups? Or you want more info? Feel free to contact us!

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Send us a message when you want to be added to a group.

# FREE-ROAMING CATTLE AND OTHER LIVESTOCK ON THE ROAD? SEND PROOF TO YOUR VET!

Free-roaming cattle and livestock are not just a road-safety problem. With the current aggressive spread of the Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) in South-Africa, Namibia's free-roaming cattle, sheep and goats are a huge growing biosecurity risk. Namibia's livestock sector is valued at over N\$ 6 billion per year and heavily depends on us safeguarding our internationally recognised FMD-free status. When cattle and other livestock roam freely, they expose the entire industry to unnecessary risk!



When animals roam uncontrolled, they mix with other herds, move across grazing areas and travel long distances without supervision. If an FMD-infected animal ends up among these free-roaming cattle and other livestock, early detection becomes almost impossible. The first signs of FMD are subtle and easily overlooked, and by the time the disease is noticed, the animal may already have spread the virus widely.

FMD spreads through **direct contact, contaminated vehicles and clothing, shared grazing**, and even **short-distance aerosols** (small virus-containing droplets that infected animals release into the air when they breathe, cough, or even simply move). If FMD enters in our FMD-free zones, all exports will immediately be stopped and it will take years to regain the FMD free status. The Directorate of Veterinary Services (DVS) in Namibia has a strong movement-control system based on permits and veterinary oversight (far stricter than in South Africa), but this system only works if all cattle and livestock movements are controlled!

Right now, however, **nothing is being done about free-roaming cattle along Namibian roads**. This leaves a dangerous gap in our defence against FMD! This is why your alertness is important! If you see free-roaming cattle or other livestock:

- 🐾 Take clear photos and/or videos
- 🐾 Note the location
- 🐾 Send this information to your local (state) veterinarian

They should forward this to the FMD Task Force so that action can be taken.

**If we do not collect proof, nothing will happen.**

So be on the look-out, take photos or videos as **proof** and provide these, together with locations, **to your local (state) vet.**

ANIMAL HEALTH EMERGENCY CONTACT NUMBERS		
KARASBURG	DR DE KLERK	081 143 2911
MARIENTAL	DR NAMBINGA	081 141 5806
	DR KANUTUS	081 142 7326
	DR IYAMBO	063 242 171 / 2
KEETMANSHOOP	DR LOUWRENS	081 143 4562
	DR GROBLER	081 161 0818
GOBABIS	DR GOMXOB	081 142 3824
	DR JUNIAS	081 146 3418
OTJINENE	DR KAPIMBUA	081 141 5850
EPUKIRO	DR VEII	081 145 8421
WINDHOEK	DR MURANGI	081 145 7041
	DR ALUGONGO	081 145 8422
OMARURU	DR OOSTHUYZEN	081 162 2111
	DR KAZARAKO	081 129 1034
WALVISBAY	DR HAWANGA	081 143 1149
OKAHANDJA	DR NDINOSHIHO	081 141 9716
OKAKARARA	DR PAULUS	081 165 3530
OTJIWARONGO	DR UUSIKU	081 146 0856
GROOTFONTEIN	DR LUKAS	081 143 1159
OTAVI	DR DAVID	081 148 9184
OUTJO	DR SIMASIKU	081 165 0109
KAMANJAB	DR KATUMBE	081 143 1148

# FMD AND VACCINES

In our [January newsletter](#) we explained the symptoms of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD), how it spreads, and why we MUST keep it out of Namibia's FMD-free zone. We also touched on FMD vaccination, but we like to go a bit more into detail on this topic.

Let's first start with an overview of the current spread of FMD in the countries surrounding Namibia. Currently, **FMD is present in all nine provinces in South-Africa**. On 08 February 2026, a FMD case was detected in Kuruman, Northern Cape, only 400 km from the Namibian border. Unfortunately, maps showing the outbreaks in SA are not up to date. On 13 February the South-African government declared the FMD crisis as a National State of Disaster and just started with a **mass vaccination campaign**. In spite of all this, in most areas of SA there is still no effective control/restriction of animal movements, likely the single most important contributing factor to the rapid spread of FMD!

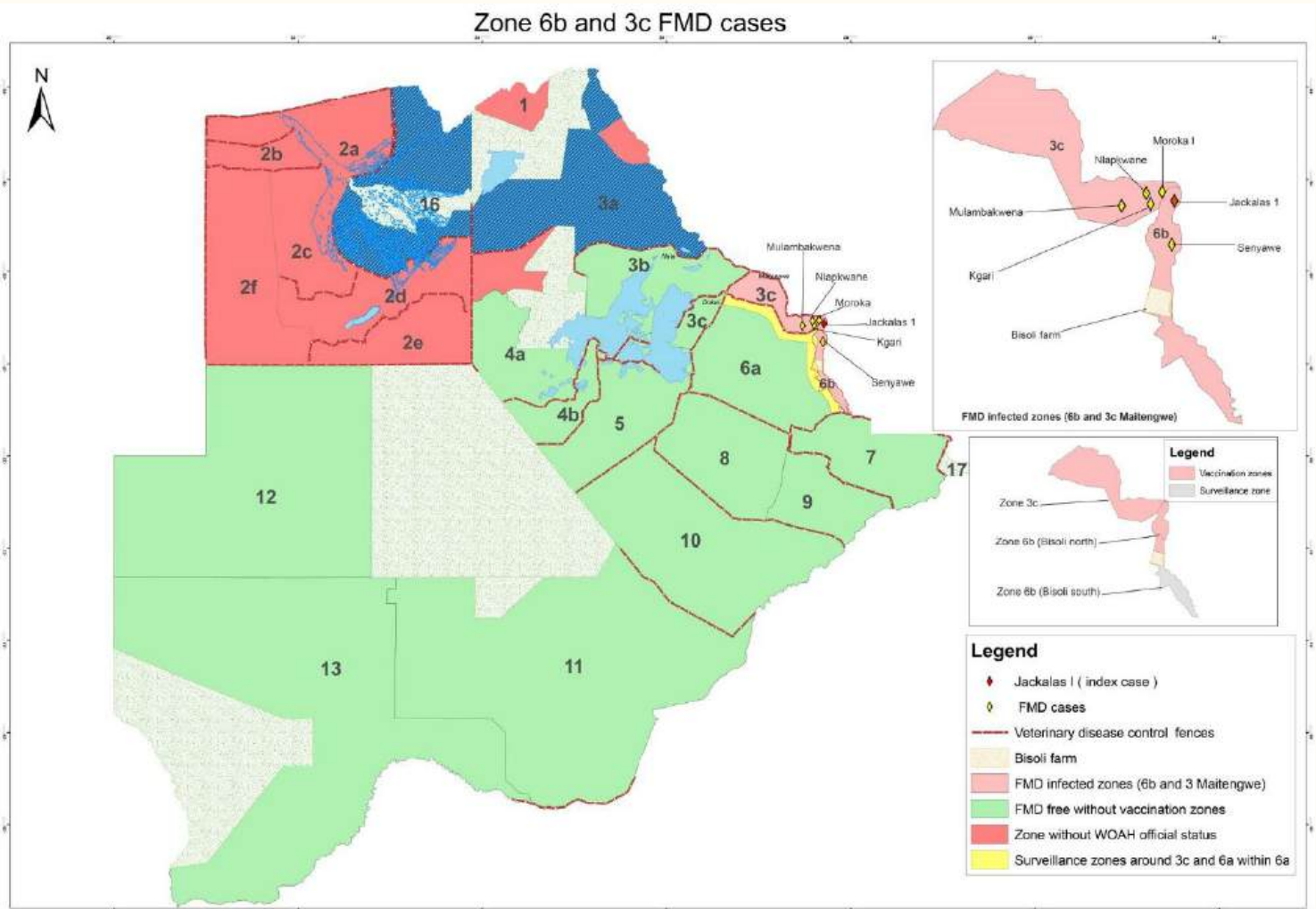
On 21 February the South-African government received the first shipment of one million FMD vaccines from Biogénesis Bagó in Argentina. Together with other shipments from BVI in Botswana and Dollvet in Turkey this should lead to more than 5 million vaccines that enter South-Africa by the end of March. The South-African Agriculture Research Council (ARC) has committed to produce 20,000 vaccines per week and scaling up to 200,000 per week by 2027.

South Africa has launched an ambitious 10-year, four-phase FMD vaccination strategy to combat widespread outbreaks. This plan includes:

1. **Phase 1 (Years 1-2):** Intensive vaccination with the aim of vaccinating 80% of the countries cattle with priority given to the most severely affected regions, enhanced surveillance, and improved, rapid, and widespread movement control
2. **Phase 2 (Years 2-4):** Establishing secure, fenced, or controlled buffer zones, and applying for World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) recognized free status.
3. **Phase 3 (Years 4-7):** Phased, evidence-based cessation of vaccination in specific, disease-free zones.
4. **Phase 4 (Years 7-10):** National cessation of vaccination, achieving nation-wide FMD-free status.

The FMD disaster currently playing out in SA is a direct consequence of the laissez-faire attitude of state and provincial authorities which results in massive financial losses. It is the duty of all Namibians to guard against this happening here. Be vigilant, cooperate with authorities requests of movement control and report any people trespassing.

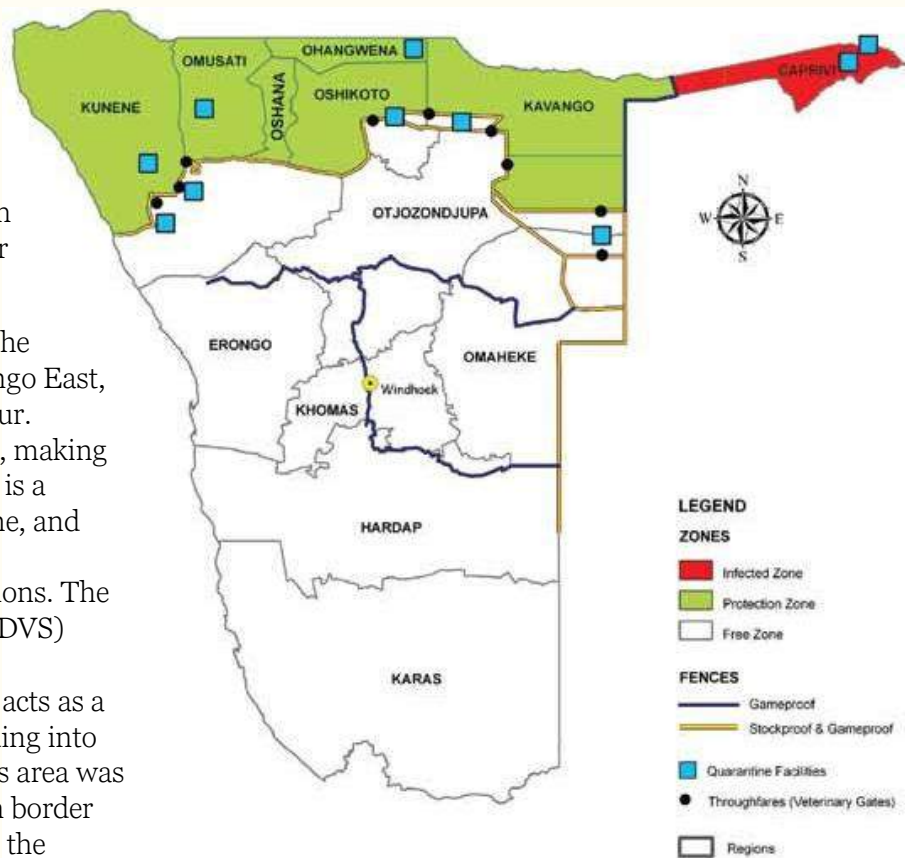
Botswana also confirmed outbreaks of FMD. It is important to note that Botswana is divided into different Disease Control Zones which will make their FMD management more effective. These zones separate FMD-free areas (eligible for export) from endemic or higher-risk areas (where vaccination and restrictions are applied). FMD has recently been detected and confirmed in two zones; zone 6B (29 January) and zone 3C (17 February). In spite of both these zones being located in the northeastern part of Botswana and were, within their management system already classified as higher-risk (non-export) zones, the EU and UK immediately suspended the import of fresh bovine meat from Botswana. **This shows how sensitive trade partners are to any FMD risk!**



*A map showing Botswana's Disease Control Zones. The first outbreak on 29 January was confirmed in domestic cattle at the Jakalalas 1 crush. Of the 187 susceptible cattle, 35 animals had clinical FMD signs. It is suspected that the infection came from infected animals at shared grazing and/or watering points, and illegal animal movement. An immediate ban on the movement of all cloven-hoofed animals was implemented. According to the Botswana government, already 15,305 of the currently targeted 17,000 cattle in zones 3c and 6b have been vaccinated against FMD. © Botswana Ministry of Land and Agriculture*

Like Botswana, Namibia also manages FMD through a zoning system. This system is recognized by the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH).

- 🐾 **Infected Zone (red):** This includes the Zambezi Region and parts of Kavango East, where African buffalo naturally occur. Buffalo are natural carriers of FMD, making disease control very difficult. There is a constant risk of infection in this zone, and outbreaks are managed here with vaccination and movement restrictions. The Directorate of Veterinary Services (DVS) vaccinates cattle three times a year.
- 🐾 **Protection Zone (green):** This zone acts as a buffer to prevent FMD from spreading into the FMD-free zone. Historically this area was free from FMD, but due to the open border with Angola this zone could not get the WOAH FMD-free status. DVS vaccinates high-risk cattle twice a year.
- 🐾 **FMD-Free Zone (white):** Covering most of Namibia's commercial farming areas, this zone has been officially recognized by WOAH since 1997 as FMD-free zone without vaccination. It is therefore eligible for the export of beef to the EU, China, and other premium markets.
- 🐾 **Between the Protection- and FMD-free Zone lies the Veterinary Cordon Fence (VCF, also known as the Red Line).** This is the dividing line; north is the endemic risk area, south is the export-certified FMD-free zone.



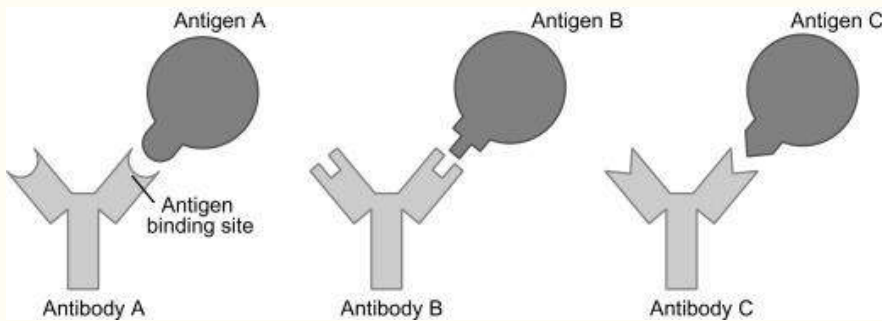
*The FMD zones in Namibia, including the Veterinary Cordon Fence © MAWF, Directorate of Veterinary Services, 2010*

Okay, now you should be all up to speed regarding the latest FMD situation! Let's go back to the topic we wanted to discuss; FMD vaccines. Our FMD-free zone is a zone where we do not vaccinate. You might think, since FMD is now so close by, we should be proactive and vaccinate! Like we do with kudu-rabies outbreaks for example?

It is **very important to understand that vaccination in the Namibian FMD-free zone will be harmful**. First of all, as mentioned earlier, the FMD-free zone is officially recognized by the WOAH, as 'FMD-free without vaccination'. This status is the foundation of Namibia's meat export industry. If vaccines are used in the FMD-free zone, the WOAH will suspend the status immediately. The reason for this? **Vaccination will complicate disease recognition.**

Why is this? A quick biology lesson! When an animal gets sick, or gets vaccinated, the body produces antibodies. Antibodies are the immune system's defence tools.

- 🐾 When a virus or bacteria enters the body, the immune system recognizes the invaders, who are called **antigens**.
- 🐾 In response, the body produces **antibodies** that are shaped in such a way that they bind to the antigens (like a lock and key).
- 🐾 Once attached, the antibodies can block the invader from infecting cells, and mark it for destruction by other immune cells.



*Antibodies are special proteins that lock onto specific antigens (the 'bad guys'). The shape of antibodies varies, and matches the shape of the antigen perfectly.*

© [Thomas M. Chused](#)

Normally, when an animal gets sick, the body produces antibodies, and 'remembers' the antigen. This memory is basically what we call immunity.

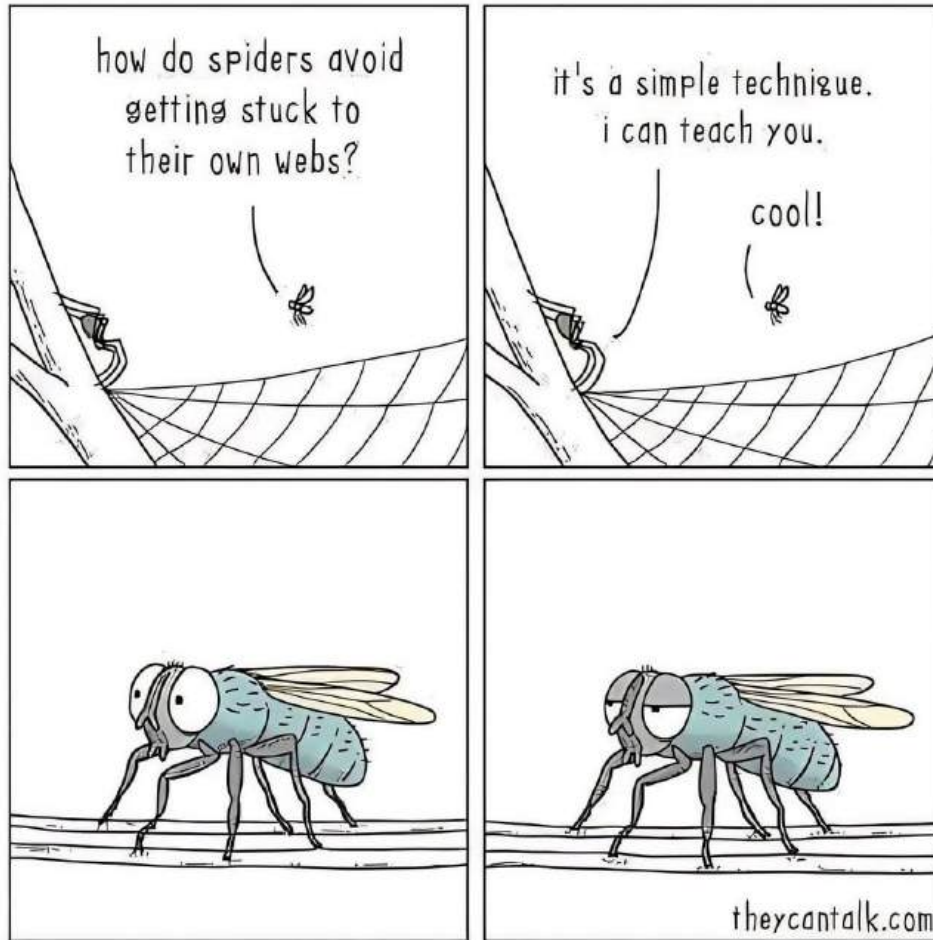
A vaccine is made from a killed or weakened version of the disease-causing organism. In case of the FMD vaccines, we make use of killed vaccines, since it is such a highly contagious disease. Even though the virus is killed (better said, chemically inactivated), the antigens of the virus remain intact. So, when the vaccine is injected, the immune system sees the antigen (vaccine) as an invader. The body makes antibodies, and will remember the antigen and how to destroy it in future. The body basically reacts the same way as if it was exposed to the real disease. If you want to read more about this topic, check ['Rabies in kudu and eland: how vaccination leads to immunity'](#).

We hope you understand now that **vaccinated animals produce antibodies that look similar to those produced by infected (sick) animals**. Standard blood tests cannot easily distinguish between an animal that has been infected, and one that has been vaccinated. This means that Namibia would no longer be able to **prove** that our cattle are truly disease free.

There are several 'variants' of FMD, called **serotypes**. These are basically variants of the virus. Globally, there are 7 serotypes: O, A, C, SAT1, SAT2, SAT3, and Asia1. Each of these serotypes have different antigens. And here we have a good example of why not to import (illegal) vaccines yourself! In South-Africa illegal vaccines were imported in December, presumably manufactured in Kenya. These vaccines contained doses for the A and O serotypes of the FMD virus, whilst South-Africa's outbreaks involve the SAT1, ST2 and SAT3 serotypes. That means that these vaccines are not only ineffective, they also can be dangerous! If contaminated or improperly handled, they could introduce new serotypes (A and O) into South Africa! Furthermore, under the current Namibian law FMD vaccines may only be purchased and administered by DVS. In addition, any cattle found below the VCF that has been illegally been vaccinated will be subject to culling.

The important take-home message is that South-Africa vaccinates because FMD is now everywhere. Botswana vaccinates in high-risk zones, and despite the different FMD zones, it still faces meat trade suspensions from the EU and the UK. The strength of Namibia is the FMD-free zone without vaccination. We must hold the line on the borders and the VCF. Vaccination belongs in endemic zones, not in the free zone. Vaccinating in the FMD-free zone will destroy our export advantage. At this stage, **biosecurity** is our most important form from protection. Be strict about where you drive, the clothes you wear, and the food you buy and transport, same goes for guests you receive on your farm. Every movement matters!

If you have questions, feel free to contact us or your local vet. It is important we all understand the risks of this disease.



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