

## Survey to determine avian influenza presence in SA milk

The Dairy R&D Committee (DRDC) of Milk SA approved – in principle – a survey to establish whether highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1 poses any danger to cattle in South Africa. The initiative came from Dr Mark Chimes, Milk SA's programme manager for animal health and welfare. The approach will be to conduct a survey to determine the presence, or absence, of HPAI in retail milk. Samples from various brands will be tested.

However, the proposed survey would need to be presented to the National Department of Agriculture's (NDA) Director of Animal Health for approval, since HPAI is a controlled disease. HPAI was detected in the United States in April 2024 and was also confirmed on Marion Island recently.



The Dairy R&D Committee.

## Dairy R&D Committee takes pride in its work

The DRDC is one of the most innovative and energetic committees of Milk SA, with members across the spectrum of disciplines relevant to the primary and secondary industry sectors. A booklet will soon be issued, proudly reflecting on projects of the past ten years. Milk SA takes pride in the committee's work and each member's contributions.

Committee member	Professional capacity
Jompie Burger	Manager: Dairy Standard Agency (DSA)
Dr Mark Chimes	Milk SA programme manager: animal health and welfare
Charl du Plessis	Food scientist
Prof Theuns Erasmus	Previous dean of agriculture: University of Pretoria
Nico Fouché	CEO: Milk SA
Chris Fourie	Independent consultant for dairy producers in South Africa
Alwyn Kraamwinkel	CEO: South African Milk Processors' Organisation (Sampro)
Nigel Lok	Producer of unprocessed milk
Dr Heinz Meissner	R&D programme manager for Milk SA
Hannes Neethling	Producer of unprocessed milk
Dr Joubert Nolte	Animal feed scientist
Dr Colin Ohlhoff	Milk SA programme manager: environmental sustainability
Portia Phohlo	Agricultural consultant
Edu Roux	Secretary: SA National Committee of the International Dairy Federation

## Scientific approach to animal welfare

Historical data of animal welfare within South Africa is extremely limited. It is therefore essential that the current level of welfare is determined to set a baseline. This can then be used to determine the improvement in animal welfare on dairy farms in the future. Milk SA's DRDC approved this project, which is set to run for a period of five years to determine the level of improvement over that period. A student from Stellenbosch University will focus on calf welfare compliance as part of her MSc degree.

## Dairy exports to China

There is still a long road until the first consignment can leave our ports. The signing of a detailed protocol was a very important first step towards this end. This protocol addresses inspection, quarantine, and sanitary requirements.

Already before the signing of the protocol, the organised dairy industry of South Africa, in collaboration with the NDA, attended to the review of trade-related policies as required by the European Union (EU), China, and other countries.

The following progress can be reported:

### VPN20 – procedures for registration of a veterinary approved dairy export establishment:

The NDA adjusted the EU protocol to accommodate China's requirements. The NDA consulted the organised dairy industry whereafter the DSA and provincial veterinarians collaborated to compile the final procedure, which was published in January 2025.

### National chemical residue monitoring programme:

After a list of prohibited residues was obtained from China, the DSA compiled a risk profile for the monitoring programme. Also, a survey was done to establish the use of substances such as veterinary medicines and pesticides, as well as the levels of the residues (including heavy metals). These results are about to be tabled to the NDA.

### Concession regarding foot-and-mouth disease

**(FMD):** The Chinese government will allow milk from areas that are free from FMD. Other communicable diseases will also be taken into consideration.

**Audits and registration of exporters that are interested in exporting to China:** Apart from the South African export certificate, each province will need to approve prospective exporters in collaboration with the national office of the NDA.

**Inspections by the Chinese authorities:** The Chinese authorities were eager to send an inspection team as early as May 2025 to assess the South African certification structures as well as the facilities from where exports were about to happen. However, this is postponed to September, as quite some work still needs to be done.

### Registration of South African approved facilities:

Only facilities that are approved by the South African authorities will be eligible for registration by the Chinese authorities.

**Other considerations:** Prospective exporters must also familiarise themselves with Chinese regulations on unprocessed milk, food safety, composition of the different types of dairy products, and packaging and metrology.

A China Export Task Team was initiated by Milk SA to facilitate and harmonise the responsibilities of the various role-players and to communicate efficiently with all role-players involved. Milk SA acknowledges the work of Jompie Burger of the DSA and De Wet Jonker of Sampro in the regard. De Wet is also the Milk SA project manager: customs duties and market access.