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**ORGANISATION MONDIALE DE LA SANTÉ ANIMALE**  
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# Veterinary services as essential services amidst a lockdown

24<sup>th</sup> Conference of the  
OIE Regional Commission for Africa

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# Presentation outline

- Brief history on the declaration of veterinary services as essential services and expected conduct of officials performing these duties
- Permissions and enforcement of lockdown and exemptions
- Challenges for veterinary services during lockdown and solutions
- Involvement of the OVR
- Conclusions



# Brief history

- South Africa reported her first COVID-19 case on March 5, 2020
- The President of the Republic of South Africa declared a national state of emergency on March 15, 2020
- On 23, March 2020, a list of essential services during lock down was published and the list included Wildlife Management, Anti poaching, Animal Care and Veterinary Services



All activities related to the above were also essential

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# Brief History

- Important to say despite this declaration, it was still expected that all the activities the exempted officials are going to engage in will minimize or eliminate as much as possible physical interactions among staff and with customers
- Ensure appropriate health measures were in place
- Restrict activity to only what is considered essential



# Permissions and exemptions

- The police, defense force and traffic officials enforced movement controls
- Personnel performing essential services had to be provided with letters to prove that they are allowed to travel to perform veterinary services
- These letters had to be endorsed by the head of veterinary services and or the Director General of the Department.



# Challenges and solutions

- All veterinary officials performing the duties had to carry the letters with them as they were travelling for duty
- Private practitioners were also deemed to be performing necessary services
- Every now and then there would be challenges related to those who were performing animal welfare and animal grooming services
- Similarly, letters were issued to them



# Challenges and solutions

- Challenges were experienced with the training of veterinary students and their year was extended
- The students only concluded their studies recently



# Challenges and solutions

- The ongoing animal disease outbreak investigations had to be performed irrespective of lockdown provisions
- Farmers were not certain as to whether they should take their animals for inspection or not
- Majority of them were uncertain as to whether they won't be exposing themselves to danger or not.
- The farmers had to be visited individually to ensure that the weekly inspections in the protection zones are being



# Challenges and solutions

- This unfortunately lead to travels for officials far more than they would travel resulting in restrictions on travel
- The managers were contacted to provide reasons for the need to increase travel allowance for the officials
- In some instances it was necessary to conduct information campaigns
- The country was still in a position to conduct its surveillance , vaccinations and reporting for animal diseases



# Challenges and solutions

- Our regular liaison meeting were conducted on virtual platforms
- All the necessary industry liaison meetings were conducted even much better than if they were physical meetings

# Diagnostic testing at ARC-OVR

- An MTA was signed with the NHLS to subcontract the ARC to assist in the diagnostic testing of human samples.
- The ARC assisted with their capacity to test up to 700 samples a day, resulting in 3500 samples a week.
- To date the ARC has assisted in clearing over 5000 samples of the backlog experienced.



# Conclusion

- Veterinary services and related activities, wildlife management and anti-poaching were declared essential services during all lockdown levels in South Africa
- Several challenges were encountered in implementing veterinary services
- We can learn from other OIE members how they dealt with respective country situations



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# THANK YOU