MNR hampers control of foot-and-mouth

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MASVINGO.

THE department of veterinary services has stopped foot-and-mouth disease control patrols at the Gonarezhou National Park because of the MNR bandit activity.

"We cannot patrol our fences at the moment because of the security situation," acting provincial veterinary officer for Masvingo, Ernest Dzimwasha, said yesterday.

The department, he said, had last month withdrawn all personnel who were in charge of preventing the movement of buffalo from Gonarezhou to prevent the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease.

He, however, added that there was no immediate danger of the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease "because everything else is under control".

Cde Dzimwasha said his department had a buffalo eradication team based in the area so that any buffalo which escaped from the national park and mingled with cattle could be quickly killed. This team had now been withdrawn.

Despite this, the twice-yearly vaccination of livestock continues against the disease which could seriously jeopardise beef exports to the European Economic Community if it broke out.

Added to this, the department was still enforcing regulations preventing the movement of cattle from red zones (areas susceptible to the disease) to clear zones.

The department had formed its own veterinary protection unit, but they were still waiting for mine-protected vehicles which they had requested from the Central Mechanical Equipment Department.

They had also asked for distinctive uniforms which would easily identify veterinary staff.

Meanwhile, the people of Nyajena in Masvingo district are reported to be cutting fences across the veterinary "green line" separating the area from commercial farms, thereby causing a serious danger of the outbreak of foot-and-mouth.

Cde Dzimwasha said the problem had political connotations because the control zones were established before independence and now the people are saying part of the land where their cattle are not allowed to graze belongs to them. — Ziana.