

SAFA National Environmental, Animal Welfare and Biosecurity Guidelines

1. Members' Code

Every member of the South African Feedlot Association undertakes to:

- Promote the image, credibility and standing of the Association at all times.
- Conduct business in an ethical, transparent and honest manner.
- Implement fair, lawful and proper employment practices.
- Promote a positive and respectful attitude towards fellow members and industry stakeholders.
- Support the aims and objectives of the Association when representing the feedlot industry.
- Practise humane livestock production systems that are compatible with environmental protection, animal welfare, food safety and responsible disease control.
- Comply with all applicable legislation, including environmental, animal welfare, labour, animal health and biosecurity requirements.

2. Livestock Code:

The Five Rights of Animals

The Five Rights of Animals remain the foundation for humane handling and beef production in intensive feeding systems.

1.Right to Freedom of Movement

- ❖ Feedlot pens must be designed and managed according to accepted specifications for pen area, animal size, mass class, surface condition and prevailing climatic conditions.
- ❖ Animals must not be left in confined spaces such as races, crushes, dipping pens, arrival pens or sorting pens for longer than necessary.
- ❖ Pen slopes must allow adequate runoff and drying, especially during heavy rainfall. Manure must be removed routinely and at least annually.

2. Right to Free Access to Fresh Feed and Water

- ❖ Pens must provide sufficient bunk space to allow optimal daily feed intake.
- ❖ Fresh feed and clean water must be available at all times. Feed bunks and water troughs must be cleaned routinely and maintained in good condition.

3. Right to Appropriate Health Care

- ❖ Feedlots should avoid purchasing sick, injured, weak or visibly deformed animals where possible.

- ❖ Animals must be inspected on arrival and treated, vaccinated or processed according to veterinary advice, disease risk, area of origin and feedlot location.
- ❖ Sick animals must be identified early, removed from production pens and treated in hospital pens by trained personnel.
- ❖ No treatment, feeding regime or management practice that compromises animal health or welfare may be permitted.
- ❖ Dust must be controlled as far as reasonably possible, as it may contribute to disease spread and respiratory stress.

4. Right to Freedom from Injury and Suffering

- ❖ Tired, severely injured or sick animals must not be transported to or from a feedlot unless under proper veterinary direction.
- ❖ Seriously injured or terminally ill animals must be humanely euthanised as quickly as possible.
- ❖ Handling facilities, loading ramps and equipment must be designed and maintained to prevent bruising, slipping, falling, abrasions and other injuries.
- ❖ Damaged facilities must not be used until repaired.

5. Right to Freedom from Harassment

- ❖ Animals that are weak, injured, bullied, undersized, blind, deformed or otherwise vulnerable must be removed and grouped appropriately.
- ❖ Animals must be placed in suitable size, age and sex categories to reduce stress, injury and harassment.
- ❖ Malicious ill-treatment, excessive use of electric prodders, beating, tail-twisting, kicking, shouting, or inappropriate use of sticks, whips or branding irons is unacceptable and must result in disciplinary action.

3. Code for Feedlots

3.1 Aim and Objective

The aim of this Code is to promote responsible feedlot standards, good husbandry, animal welfare, environmental protection, biosecurity and disease control.

These guidelines must be read together with:

- **The Animals Protection Act, 1962.**

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- **The Animal Diseases Act, 1984.**

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- Applicable FMD movement control notices and veterinary directives.

- **The National Environmental Management Act.**

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- **The National Water Act.**

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- Applicable provincial environmental authorisations and municipal requirements.

- **The Code of Practice for the Handling and Transport of Livestock.**

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- **Animal Disease Control Act of 1984.**

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4. Feedlot Construction and Environmental Management

- Feedlots should, wherever possible, be established on suitable ground with a mild slope to allow rapid runoff and reduce excessive mud or waterlogging.
- All pens must be clearly numbered or otherwise identified to allow proper recordkeeping, animal tracing, inspections and emergency management.
- Handling facilities and loading ramps must prevent injuries and must be maintained in safe working condition.
- Pens must provide sufficient space. As a minimum, pen space may not be less than:
 - 9 m² per bovine.
 - 2 m² per sheep.

□ Environmental management must include:

- Stormwater control.
- Manure management.
- Effluent containment.
- Fly, odour and dust control.
- Prevention of groundwater and surface-water contamination.
- Safe carcass disposal.
- Routine inspection and maintenance of drainage systems.
- Compliance with all environmental authorisations and water-use requirements.

5. Feedlot Management

- Animals must be allowed to rest after transport, with access to feed and water before routine procedures are undertaken.
- Arrival during daylight hours is recommended, especially in winter.
- Blind, deformed, injured, weak or high-risk animals must be separated.
- Animals must be grouped according to size, age, sex and management category.
- Sick or injured animals should not be required to walk excessive distances. Hospital pens must be strategically placed and accessible.
- Animals must not be confined in processing areas longer than necessary. All procedures must be supervised by trained personnel.

6. Worker Identification and Training

All personnel working with animals must be identifiable, suitably trained and competent.

Training should include:

- Humane livestock handling.
- Feedlot health protocols.
- Biosecurity procedures.
- FMD awareness and reporting.
- Safe use of equipment.
- Emergency procedures.
- Recordkeeping.
- Personal protective equipment requirements.

7. Feed and Water Supply

- Water troughs must be positioned so that they can be inspected and cleaned easily and so that animals cannot easily foul the water with feed.
- Fresh, clean and sufficient water must be available at all times.
- Feed bunks and water troughs must be kept clean and maintained in good condition.

8. Health Management

Feedlots must maintain a herd health programme under appropriate veterinary guidance. Health management must include:

- Arrival inspection.
- Parasite control where necessary.
- Vaccination protocols based on veterinary advice and legal requirements.
- Daily observation.
- Timely treatment of sick animals.
- Hospital pen management.
- Mortality records.
- Treatment records.
- Antimicrobial stewardship.
- Dust and stress reduction.

9. Emergency Slaughter and Euthanasia

- Seriously injured, downer or terminally ill animals must be dealt with quickly and humanely.
- Emergency slaughter or euthanasia must be performed by trained personnel and in accordance with applicable legal and welfare requirements.

10. Emergency Preparedness

Each feedlot must maintain a practical contingency plan for:

- Disease outbreaks.
- FMD suspicion or confirmation.
- Fire.
- Flooding.
- Water interruption.
- Feed supply disruption.
- Extreme heat or cold.
- Mortalities.
- Transport disruption.
- Power failure.
- Environmental incidents.

11. FMD Biosecurity and Regulatory Requirements

11.1 General Principle

Foot-and-Mouth Disease remains a controlled animal disease in South Africa. Feedlots must comply with all movement controls, quarantine requirements, veterinary instructions and reporting duties issued under the **Animal Diseases Act and related notices**. In 2026, national FMD control measures continue to focus on surveillance, vaccination under state control, movement control and traceability.

11.2 Reporting of Suspected FMD

Any suspected FMD case must be reported immediately to the local State Veterinarian or Animal Health Technician.

Suspicious signs may include:

- Drooling or excessive salivation.
- Blisters or lesions in the mouth, on the tongue, lips, gums, teats or hooves.
- Lameness.
- Reluctance to move.
- Fever.
- Sudden drop in feed intake.
- Sudden drop in milk production.
- High morbidity in a group of animals.

Failure to report suspected FMD is an offence, and non-compliance with disease control measures or movement restrictions may result in legal penalties.

11.3 Movement Control

- No cloven-hoofed animals may be moved in contravention of applicable FMD movement restrictions.
- Where movement permits are required, animals may only move with valid veterinary movement permits or other official documentation required by the relevant authority.
- Movement conditions may differ between provinces, disease management areas, infected areas, protected areas and disease-free areas. Feedlots must confirm current requirements with the local State Veterinarian before animals are moved.

11.4 Feedlot Admission Requirements

Before accepting cattle, feedlots should verify:

- Origin of the animals.
- Disease status of the area of origin.
- Valid movement permits where required.
- Owner or transporter declarations.
- Veterinary health declarations where required.
- Animal identification and traceability information - GLN (Global Location Number)
- Cleaning and disinfection of transport vehicles.
- Compliance with any provincial FMD protocol.

Animals from high-risk areas must only be accepted if all legal and veterinary requirements have been met.

11.5 Quarantine and Isolation

- Newly arrived animals should be managed according to risk.

- Where FMD risk exists or where movement permits require it, animals must be isolated or quarantined in accordance with veterinary instructions. Some official guidance refers to a minimum 28-day quarantine period after movement.
- Isolation areas must be managed to prevent direct and indirect contact with other animals.

11.6 Vaccination

- FMD vaccination in South Africa is strictly controlled by government and may only be performed by authorised state veterinary services or under official state direction. Feedlots may not privately vaccinate for FMD without lawful authorisation.
- Vaccinated animals must be recorded and managed according to official requirements, including identification, movement restrictions and any post-vaccination conditions.



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11.7 Biosecurity Measures

Each feedlot must maintain practical biosecurity controls, including:

- Controlled access to the premises.
- Visitor registers.
- Dedicated loading and offloading points.
- Vehicle cleaning and disinfection.
- Separation of clean and dirty zones.
- Restricted access to production pens.
- Staff training on FMD signs and reporting.
- Control of livestock transporters.
- Control of shared equipment.
- Recordkeeping of animal movements.
- Immediate isolation of suspect animals.
- Communication with the State Veterinarian when risk is identified.

11.8 Recordkeeping

Feedlots must keep accurate records of:

- Animal arrivals and departures.
- Origin and destination.
- Permit numbers where applicable.
- Transporter details.
- Vehicle registration numbers.
- Health declarations.
- Vaccination records.
- Treatment records.
- Mortalities.

- Suspected disease reports.
- Visitors and service providers.
- Cleaning and disinfection records.

11.9 Auctions, Dealers and High-Risk Movements

- Feedlots should avoid informal or undocumented livestock purchases.
- Where auctions, speculators, dealers or multiple-origin groups are involved, stricter verification should be applied before animals are accepted.
- Animals must not be accepted where required documents are absent, incomplete, suspicious or inconsistent with official movement-control requirements.

11.10 Action in the Event of Suspected FMD

If FMD is suspected, the feedlot must immediately:

1. Stop movement of animals on and off the premises.
2. Isolate the affected animals.
3. Notify the State Veterinarian or Animal Health Technician.
4. Restrict access to the affected area.
5. Prevent movement of vehicles, people and equipment from the suspect area.
6. Record all recent animal movements.
7. Await official veterinary instructions.
8. Cooperate fully with sampling, quarantine, tracing, disinfection and other control measures.

11.11 National Traceability and Identification Requirements

11.11.1 General Principle

Traceability is a critical component of animal disease control, food safety, market access, environmental accountability and national biosecurity.

All feedlots should maintain a complete and auditable traceability system enabling the rapid identification of:

- Animal origin.
- Ownership history.
- Movement history.
- Health status.
- Vaccination status.
- Transport details.
- Slaughter destination.
- Contact animals.
- High-risk exposure pathways.

Feedlots are expected to support the implementation of national livestock traceability systems and comply with any compulsory identification requirements issued under South African legislation.

11.11.2 Animal Identification

All cattle entering a feedlot should be individually or batch identifiable through approved identification methods, including where applicable:

- Ear tags.
- RFID tags.
- Branding.
- Tattoo systems.
- Lot identification systems.
- Electronic traceability systems.

Identification marks must remain legible and linked to feedlot records throughout the feeding period.

No unidentified animals should be accepted into a feedlot system.

11.11.3 Traceability Records

Feedlots must maintain accurate and updated records including:

Animal Origin Information

- Farm of origin.
- Owner details.
- Auction details where applicable.
- Speculator/dealer information where applicable.
- GPS location or district where available.

Movement Information

- Date of movement.
- Departure and arrival points.
- Transporter details.
- Vehicle registration numbers.
- Movement permit numbers where applicable.
- Veterinary health declarations.

Health Information

- Vaccinations.
- Treatments administered.
- Disease incidents.
- Quarantine status.
- Mortality records.
- Laboratory test results where applicable.

Slaughter and Disposal Information

- Abattoir destination.
- Date of slaughter.
- Carcass disposal records.
- Condemnation records where applicable.

Records should be retained for a minimum period required by legislation or at least five years where no specific requirement exists.

11.11.4 Traceability During FMD Outbreaks

During an FMD outbreak or disease management intervention, feedlots must be capable of providing traceability information immediately upon request by veterinary authorities.

This includes:

- Animal source tracing.
- Contact tracing.
- Movement reconstruction.
- Pen allocation history.
- Vehicle movement history.
- Visitor records.
- Slaughter records.
- Feedlot grouping information.

Failure to maintain traceability records may compromise disease control and may result in regulatory action.

11.12 Biosecurity Protocols

11.12.1 Biosecurity Management Plan

Every feedlot should maintain a written biosecurity management plan appropriate to the scale and risk profile of the operation.

The plan should address:

- Disease prevention.
- Disease monitoring.
- Controlled access.
- Cleaning and disinfection.
- Quarantine procedures.
- Emergency disease response.
- Staff responsibilities.
- Visitor management.
- Transport biosecurity.
- Wildlife and vermin control.
- Waste and carcass management.
- Water protection measures.

The plan should be reviewed regularly and updated following disease outbreaks or regulatory changes.

11.12.2 Access Control

Feedlots should implement controlled access procedures including:

- Clearly designated entry and exit points.
- Security-controlled access where practical.
- Visitor sign-in registers.
- Restriction of unnecessary visitors.
- Designated parking areas.
- Controlled access to animal handling areas.
- Restricted entry into quarantine and hospital areas.

High-risk visitors such as livestock traders, transporters, auction personnel and veterinarians visiting infected premises should follow enhanced disinfection protocols.

11.12.3 Personnel Biosecurity

Personnel should:

- Wear appropriate protective clothing.
- Use dedicated boots or boot disinfection points.
- Wash and disinfect hands where necessary.
- Avoid unnecessary movement between high-risk and low-risk areas.
- Report signs of disease immediately.
- Receive regular biosecurity and FMD awareness training.

Staff working with sick or quarantined animals should avoid contact with healthy pens where possible.

11.12.4 Vehicle and Transport Biosecurity

All livestock transport vehicles entering or leaving the premises should be properly cleaned and disinfected.

Particular attention should be given to:

- Loading ramps.
- Wheels and wheel arches.
- Flooring.
- Internal partitions.
- Animal-contact surfaces.

Feedlots should maintain:

- Vehicle cleaning records.
- Disinfection logs.

- Transporter declarations where applicable.
Vehicles from infected or high-risk areas should be treated as high risk and managed accordingly.

11.12.5 Isolation and Quarantine Facilities

Feedlots should maintain designated isolation or quarantine facilities physically separated from the main feeding operation.

These areas should:

- Prevent direct animal contact.
 - Have separate drainage where possible.
 - Use dedicated equipment where practical.
 - Restrict staff movement between quarantine and clean areas.
 - Allow close veterinary observation.
- Animals showing signs of infectious disease must immediately be moved to isolation facilities.

11.12.6 Cleaning and Disinfection Protocols

Feedlots should maintain written cleaning and disinfection procedures covering:

- Pens.
- Handling facilities.
- Vehicles.
- Equipment.
- Water troughs.
- Feed bunks.
- Footbaths.
- Loading areas.
- Hospital facilities.

Disinfectants used should be appropriate for livestock disease control and applied according to manufacturer instructions.

Organic material should be removed before disinfection takes place.

11.12.7 Wildlife, Vermin and Pest Control

Feedlots should implement practical measures to minimise disease transmission risks associated with:

- Rodents.
- Birds.
- Stray animals.
- Wildlife species.
- Insects and flies.

Feed storage areas should be protected from contamination.

Carcass disposal must prevent scavenger access.

11.12.8 Feed and Water Biosecurity

Feed and water sources must be protected against contamination from:

- Infected animals.
- Wildlife.
- Wastewater runoff.
- Carcasses.
- Vermin.

Feed deliveries should originate from reputable suppliers operating under acceptable biosecurity standards.

11.12.9 Carcass and Waste Disposal

Dead animals and biological waste must be disposed of safely and legally.

Disposal methods may include:

- Approved rendering.
- Incineration.
- Composting where legally permitted.
- Burial where legally permitted and environmentally appropriate.
- Disposal must not contaminate:
 - Groundwater.
 - Surface water.
 - Grazing areas.
 - Feed storage areas.

11.12.10 Disease Surveillance and Monitoring

Feedlots should implement ongoing disease surveillance including:

- Daily observation of cattle.
- Monitoring feed and water intake.
- Monitoring lameness.
- Monitoring oral lesions and salivation.
- Monitoring mortality patterns.
- Recording abnormal clinical signs.

Any unusual disease pattern must immediately be reported to management and, where required, to veterinary authorities.

11.12.11 FMD-Specific Biosecurity Measures

During periods of elevated FMD risk, additional measures should include:

- Restriction of non-essential livestock movements.
- Enhanced vehicle disinfection.
- Dedicated loading teams where possible.
- Strict separation of incoming animals.
- Suspension of unnecessary farm visits.

- Enhanced traceability verification.
- Immediate reporting of suspicious clinical signs.
- Increased veterinary inspections.
- Communication with neighbouring livestock operations.
- Feedlots must comply fully with all directives issued by:
- The Department of Agriculture.
- Provincial Veterinary Services.
- State Veterinarians.
- Disease Management Area regulations.

11.12.12 Internal Biosecurity Audits

Feedlots are encouraged to conduct routine internal biosecurity audits assessing:

- Compliance with protocols.
- Staff training levels.
- Traceability effectiveness.
- Disease preparedness.
- Facility maintenance.
- Cleaning effectiveness.
- Recordkeeping quality.

Corrective actions should be documented and implemented promptly.

11.12.13 Industry Responsibility

All feedlot operators share responsibility for protecting:

- National herd health.
- Market access.
- Consumer confidence.
- Export opportunities.
- Food security.
- The sustainability and reputation of the South African red meat industry.

12. Final Statement

SAFA members are expected to operate feedlots in a manner that protects animal welfare, environmental integrity, food security, industry reputation and national disease control objectives.

In 2026, compliance with FMD regulations, movement controls, traceability requirements and biosecurity protocols is a critical part of responsible feedlot management.