

Press Release

15 January 2021

## ESSENTIAL WORKERS AND VACCINATIONS

As part of the containment of the COVID-19 pandemic, a number of goods and services has been identified as being essential. As per regulation 43148 published on 25 March 2020, veterinary services and animal welfare are included in this definition. Aside from providing adequate health support to South Africa, a reliable food supply is arguably the most vital. The [South African Veterinary Association \(SAVA\)](#), through the provision of services by its members, is committed to ensuring a high level of food safety is adhered to. Veterinary services are commonly thought of as animal care for companion animals, but veterinarians play a crucial role in monitoring and ensuring that the animals in the food chain receive optimal health care and are raised in humane conditions.

Further to this, the work that is done by veterinarians throughout the food chain, including but not limited to implementing regulations on animal health (including medication, vaccination, and health management) ensuring implementation of animal welfare standards and the traceability and food safety measures enables safe trade of animal products.

The Vaccine Roll Out Plan presented on the 7<sup>th</sup> of January 2021 by the Minister of Health identifies Essential Workers as teachers, police officers, military, miners and workers in the security, retail food, funeral, banking and essential municipal and home affairs, border control and port health services.

The Essential Workers will be vaccinated in Phase II of the roll-out plan (after health workers in Phase I) with the following other groups forming part of Phase II:

1. People in congregate settings (Persons in prison, detention centres, shelters and care homes. In addition, people working in the hospitality and tourism industry, and educational institutions are also at risk);
2. Persons 60 years and older;
3. Persons older than 18 years with co-morbidities (Persons living with HIV, tuberculosis, diabetics, chronic lung disease, cardiovascular disease, renal disease, obesity, etc)

SAVA, in conjunction with the Black Veterinary Forum (BVF), has requested the Ministers of the Department of Health and the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development to urgently rectify the exclusion of workers in veterinary and animal welfare services in the current Vaccination Roll-Out Plan. SAVA and the BVF are engaging its critical stakeholders, being the South African Veterinary Council (SAVC) and the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development to support a rapid resolution of the Essential Workers category.

“SAVA aims to support its members who are ultimately responsible for ensuring and certifying food safety in South Africa. It is therefore vital that our members are granted access to the vaccines in order to safely continue working to ensure food safety and security. Our goal is to uphold the highest standards, by utilising the professional knowledge, skills and resources of our members, says Dr Leon de Bruyn, President of the South African Veterinary Association.

To conclude, the roles and responsibilities of veterinarians range from basic animal care, ensuring animal welfare, the management of controlled veterinary diseases and the combating of foodborne illnesses that may pose a risk to public health. This ensures that consumers receive the highest grade of sustenance – farm to fork. These veterinary services are thus essential in ensuring the continued functioning of the livestock industries including but not limited to the red meat, poultry, pork and wildlife industries.

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For more information, please visit the South African Veterinary Association (SAVA) [website](#), [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#) page.

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**Best regards,  
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