**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 142**

**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER [No 1-2022 SIXTH PARLIAMENT]
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**142. Mr J Engelbrecht (DA) to ask the Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development:**

1. Whether, with reference to the devastating effects that an outbreak of the African Horse Sickness (AHS) will have on the local industry, she has been informed of the shortage of supplies of the annual mandatory AHS vaccine in the Republic; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, (a) on what date was she informed of the shortage and (b) what measures has she taken in this regard;
2. whether Onderstepoort Biological Products (OBP) took any urgent steps in response to the shortage in supplies to ensure that it can supply effective, safe and sufficient doses of the AHS vaccine in the Republic; if not, why not; if so, (a) what are the (i) details of the urgent steps taken by the OBP and (ii) timelines in this regard and (b) by what date is it envisaged that the OBP will be in a position to supply effective, safe and sufficient doses of the AHS vaccine in the Republic;
3. whether her department intends to conclude a public-private partnership (PPP) in the (a) production and (b) sale of the AHS vaccine in order to ensure that there is no shortage in supplies of the AHS vaccine in the future; if not, why not; if so, what (i) control measures will be put in place to ensure that all AHS vaccines produced and sold through a PPP meet the required animal health standards and (ii) are the further details in this regard;

(4) whether her department will implement a mechanism that would make it possible to drastically shorten the time frame required for newly developed and tested vaccines to be registered in emergency situations in order to allow for mass production and use in a short period of time; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what are the relevant details? **NW146E**

**THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, LAND REFORM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT:**

(1)(a) Yes. The Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development was informed of shortages of some vaccines (including AHS) by the National Animal Health Forum on 29 November 2021.

1. The Minister engaged both entities i.e. the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) and the Onderstepoort Biological Products (OBP) as well as Industry, including the Animal Health Forum and instructed that measures be put in place to ensure continuity in vaccine production and availability. The Minister further advised that there should be closer collaboration between the Agricultural Research Council’s Onderstepoort Veterinary Research and OBP. The Minister also engaged with industry as recently as 21 January 2022 where the OBP provided updates on vaccine availability.
2. Yes, the OBP has taken steps to prioritise AHS vaccine production. Over and above considering the possibility of public private partnerships for the development of vaccines, the OBP has undertaken the following:

(a)(i) Revision of production schedule (December 2021) to address urgent vaccine shortages

(ii) Development and implementation of a short term maintenance plan to attend to critical equipment impacting negatively on vaccine production (December 2021)

1. Below are the time lines provided by the OBP on availability of the AHS vaccine since urgent steps were taken to address shortages:
* December 2021 – AHS was available
* January 2022 – AHS was not available due to equipment failure
* February 2022 – AHS was available as of the 4th week of February

(3)(a),(b)(i),(ii) While consideration is being given to this, there have not been any active discussions on a public-private partnership arrangement with any company on the production and sale of AHS vaccine. However, related to further studies on the virus itself, there are existing arrangement with other State Owned Enterprises like the Agricultural Research Council’s Onderstepoort Veterinary Research on research to enhance the effectiveness of the vaccine itself.

1. In exceptional circumstances, where there is no other product for the intended use, the Department may fast track the review of registration applications in terms of the Fertilizers, Farm Feeds, Agricultural Remedies and Stock Remedies Act, 1947 (Act No 36 of 1947).  Where such products meet the requirement in terms of safety, efficacy and quality, registration may be granted within a short time frame. The details of speeding up the evaluations include the relevant industry making the request to speed up the evaluations, support of the need to make the vaccine available by the Director of Animal Health and consultations with potential manufactures of the that vaccine if available in the country and consideration by the Registrar of Fertilizers, Farm Feeds, Seeds and Remedies Act 36 to urgently deal with the evaluation.