

Press release: The human side to Avian Influenza

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Body: After discussions with Western Cape Minister of Social Development, Patricia De Lille, Gerrit van Rensburg, Western Cape Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development today announced a special task team to look into the plight of workers directly affected by the recent outbreak of Avian Influenza in Oudtshoorn, Western Cape.

One commercial farm in the Oudtshoorn area had to destroy more than 5500 birds in a bid to stop the spread of the virus. The outbreak has caused a complete standstill of this R1.2 billion a year industry, which employs more than 20 000 people.

“The affected farm, with 120 farm workers, will be out of operation for at least 3 months, as all birds will be destroyed. The local abattoir, employing 600 workers, as well as the other six export abattoirs in the country, will all be at a standstill until the ban on ostrich meat exports is lifted”, Van Rensburg said.

Van Rensburg said the task team will be led by Dr Gininda Msiza, Chief Director: Veterinary Services of the Western Cape Department of agriculture. Representatives from the Department of Social Development; Provincial and National Rural Development; Provincial Treasury, and the South African Ostrich Business Chamber will be on the team. “We need to find innovative ways in which to assist affected workers through this difficult time”.

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