



2024 animal diseases in review

Surveillance/ field activities

In 2024, the 36 animal health technicians working in the field for Western Cape Veterinary Services made approximately 12 000 visits to properties where animals are kept in order to do animal disease surveillance, animal census, farmer education, primary animal health care and disease control.

This report would not be possible without these animal health technicians and state veterinarians who collect and report data from the field, as well as the private veterinarians, animal keepers and all other members of the public who participate in reporting suspect outbreaks of animal diseases.

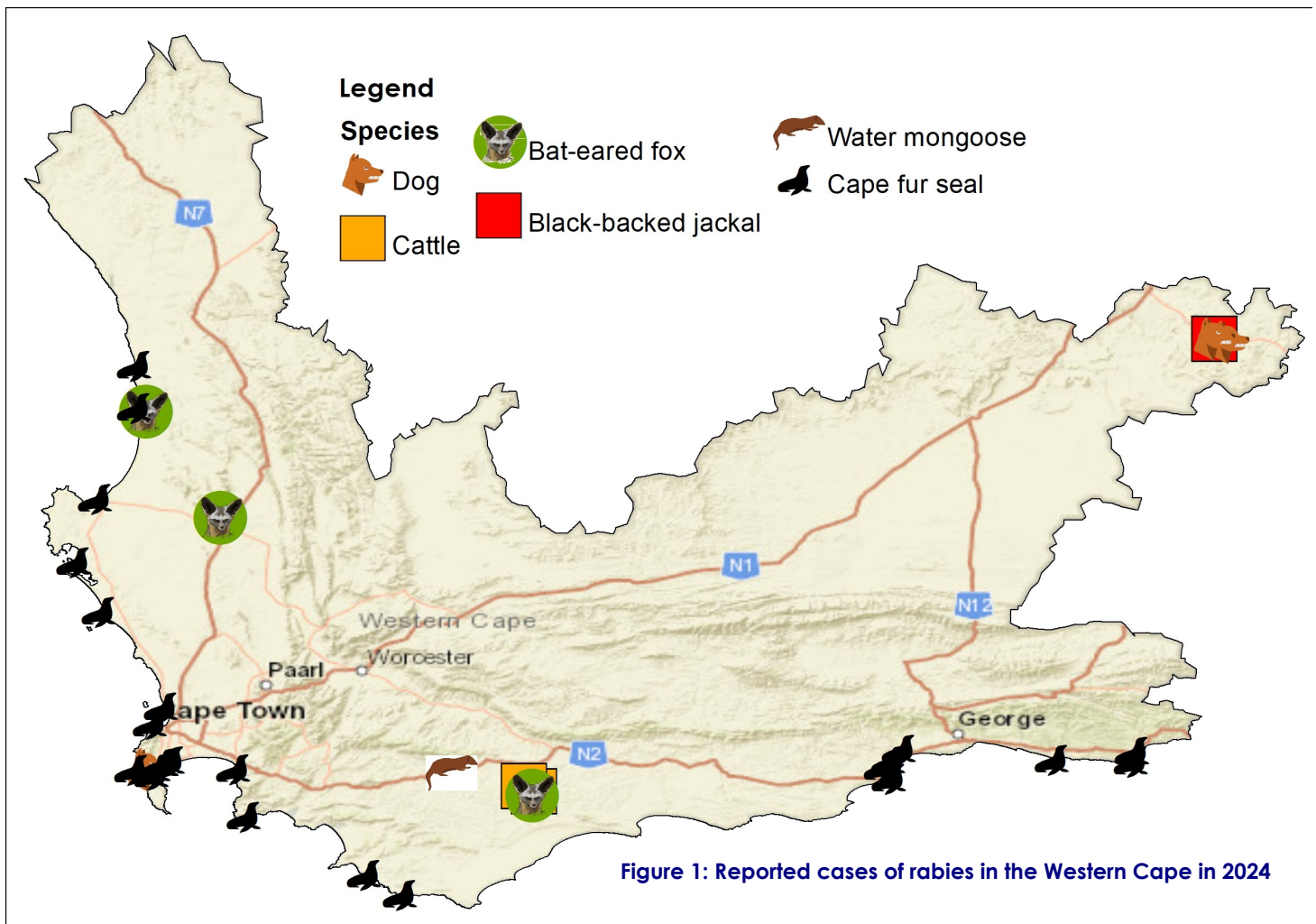
Rabies (Fig. 1)

A dramatic increase in rabies cases occurred in 2024 compared to previous years as a result of the detection

of rabies in Cape fur seals. Of the 46 rabies cases reported in the Western Cape, 36 were cases of seal rabies from all areas of the provincial coastline. Of these seal cases, 35 were confirmed through laboratory testing, while one was diagnosed based on clinical signs only. One case of rabies also occurred in a dog in Cape Town as a result of transmission from a rabid seal.

Three cases of rabies occurred in Murraysburg within a month: the first in a black-backed jackal that infected a dog in the town, and the third in a stray dog seen on a farm nearby.

Three cases of rabies were seen in bat-eared foxes in the province. South of Swellendam, cattle on two farms in close proximity were infected with rabies that was linked to bat-eared fox rabies via phylogenetic analysis. Rabies was also detected in a water mongoose west of Swellendam.



Approximately 140 000 pets were vaccinated with state-sponsored vaccine in the province in 2024. This took place in the form of rabies vaccination campaigns, routine vaccinations during farm visits and provision of vaccines to animal welfare organisations.

Canine diseases

A case of *Brucella canis* was diagnosed in a year-old castrated male dog in Cape Town that had been adopted from an animal welfare organisation as a puppy. The dog was euthanased.

In Plettenberg Bay, leishmaniasis was detected in two dogs that had been imported from Spain in 2023. The owner elected to re-export the dogs back to Spain, where the disease is endemic.

Pig diseases (Fig. 2)

Eight new outbreaks of African swine fever were detected in the province in 2024. All outbreaks occurred in small-scale farming areas where pigs are kept free-ranging and with minimal biosecurity measures in place. Two of the outbreaks in Cape Town occurred in areas that were previously affected by ASF in 2021.

Cattle diseases (Fig. 2)

Six properties in the province were quarantined after

testing positive for bovine brucellosis. Three of the properties, in Worcester, are adjacent small-scale farming areas where multiple owners keep their livestock in close proximity to each other. Another positive herd in the Theewaterskloof area is linked to movement of cattle from one of the properties in Worcester.

Two cases of bovine malignant catarrhal fever occurred where cattle were kept adjacent to wildebeest.

Small stock diseases (Fig. 2)

Eight outbreaks of sheep scab were reported and the infested flocks were treated at least twice.

Johne's disease was confirmed on three sheep farms. These farms were placed under quarantine and the affected farmers were advised to consider a vaccination programme.

Bluetongue outbreaks were reported from six sheep flocks in the Western Cape. Outbreaks occurred in March, April and December. Anecdotal reports of bluetongue were received from other areas, and it is apparent that bluetongue outbreaks are underreported.

Avian diseases (Fig. 3)

After reports of wild pigeons dying in Malmesbury, a necropsy of some of them found lymphocytic interstitial

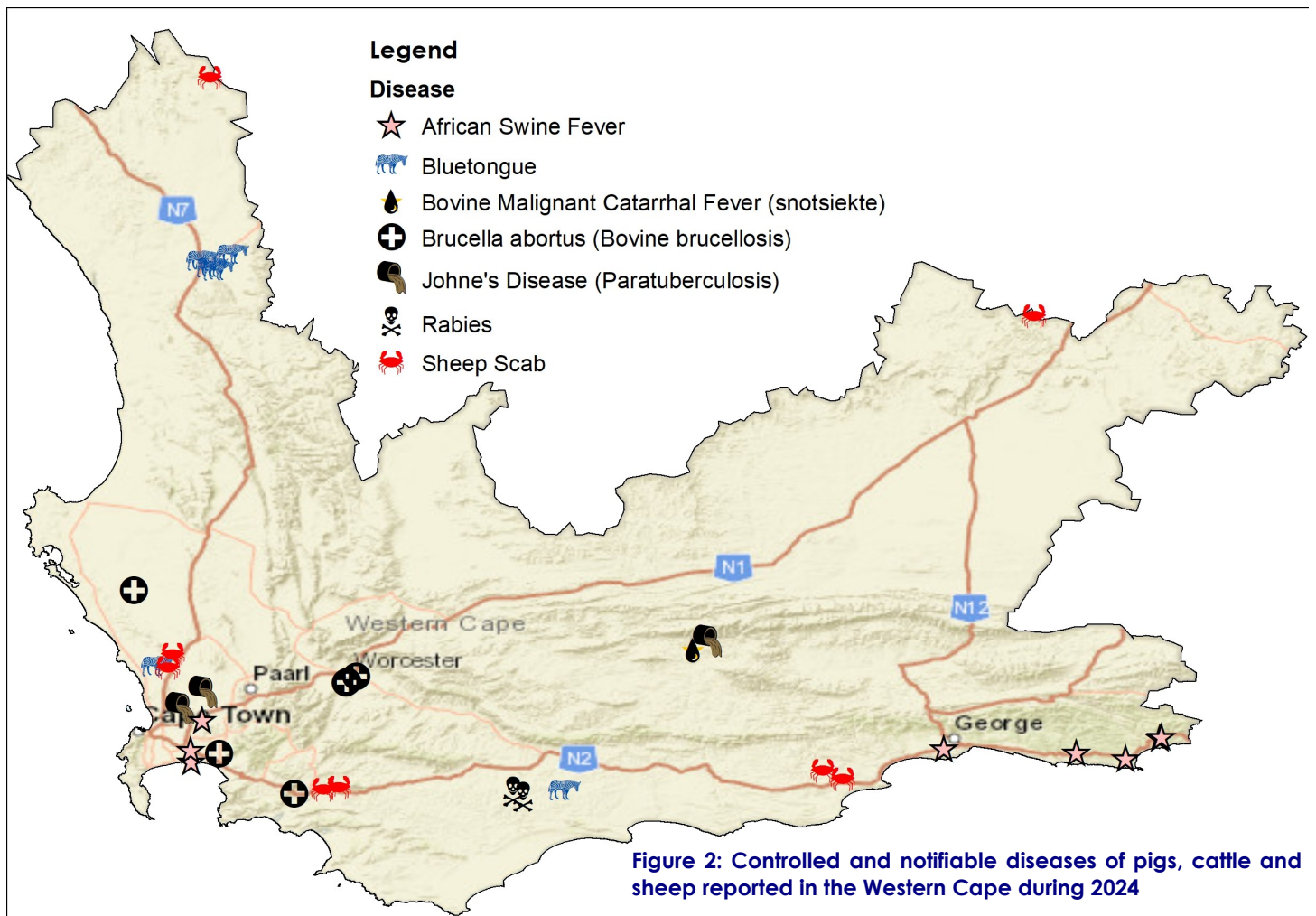


Figure 2: Controlled and notifiable diseases of pigs, cattle and sheep reported in the Western Cape during 2024

nephritis with associated pancreatic necrosis. These findings are most consistent with pigeon paramyxovirus. PCR testing was not possible at the time.

Salmonella Enteritidis (SE) was detected 19 times on broiler chicken farms during routine testing. This is a decrease of over 60% compared to 2023. SE was also cultured from an ill Hartlaub's Gull chick in Cape Town. Scavenging of food scraps was considered a possible source of infection.

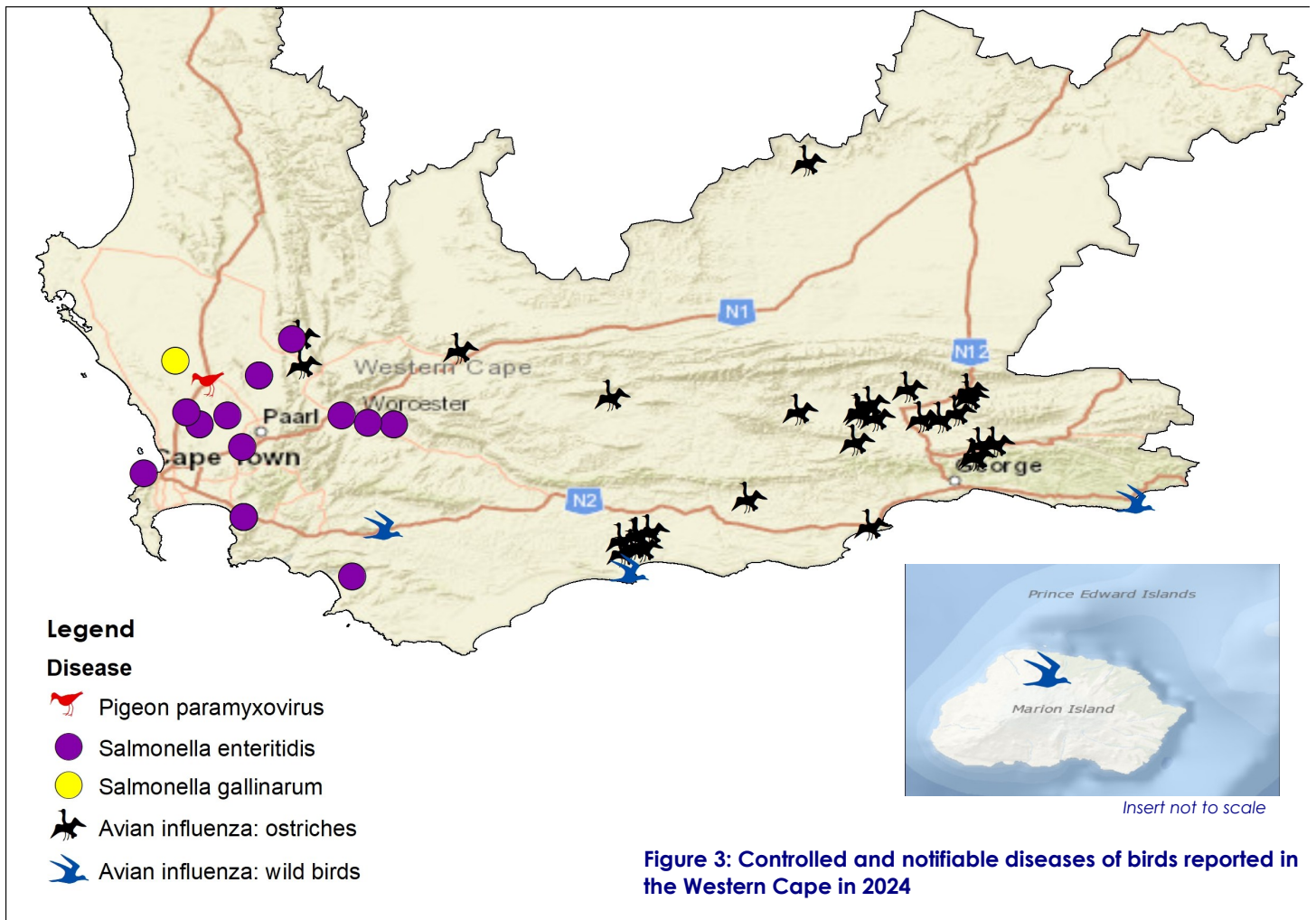
Increased mortalities were observed in layer chickens near Malmesbury and *Salmonella gallinarum* was identified as the causative organism, using serotyping. The flock was quarantined and vaccinated.

Thirty-one avian influenza outbreaks were reported in ostriches between June and December. An H6N2 virus was sequenced from the George area in August and another four H6 outbreaks were diagnosed on serology in July and November. A low pathogenicity H7N7 virus was sequenced from the Oudtshoorn area in September and H7 virus was detected with PCR near Calitzdorp in

October. Another twelve H7 outbreaks were diagnosed on serology between October and December. The remaining twelve outbreaks of avian influenza were diagnosed based on serology: influenza A ELISA tests were positive but H5, H7 and H6 haemagglutination inhibition tests were negative, so another low pathogenicity subtype is assumed.

Three avian influenza detections were made in other species. The seabird sub-genotype of high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1 was sequenced from two Swift Terns at Keurbooms River Mouth and Witsand, in March and April. An low pathogenicity H9N2 virus was sequenced from environmental samples in the Theewaterskloof municipality in September.

In addition, an outbreak of avian influenza was suspected to have started in seabirds on Marion Island in September, based on neurological clinical signs and increased mortality. Once the samples could be transported to mainland South Africa, laboratory testing in March 2025 confirmed infection with HPAI H5N1.



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