

# MP denied access to state-run vaccines manufacturer

In a statement on AllAfrica.com, Annette Steyn, Democratic Alliance (DA) Shadow Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, asks: "What is the state trying to hide at Onderstepoort Biological Products (OBP)?" Steyn said she was denied access to OBP - a state-run institute tasked to "prevent and control animal diseases that impact food security, human health and livelihood".

She was denied access despite having organised the visit in advance, Steyn said. Recently, "the DA has been publicising the deficiency of state-produced vaccines for a number of animal diseases, including Rift Valley Fever and African Horse Sickness."

Following the deaths of thousands of livestock, the statement said, affected agricultural businesses are reportedly lodging complaints with OBP and seeking compensation for the financial losses incurred. "One has to wonder what OBP is trying to hide", Steyn said. "I wrote to the Minister [of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Tina Joemat-Pettersson] last week to call for steps to be taken to ensure that OBP vaccines are subjected to testing by an independent oversight body such as the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS). She has not responded."

According to Steyn's statement, OBP "has a monopoly on the production of vaccines [and it] seems intent on maintaining their monopoly in this lucrative industry at all costs." A request has been lodged with the National Consumer Commission, she said, asking for an investigation into potential breaches of the Consumer Protection Act (2008) by OBP with respect to vaccines produced to combat Rift Valley Fever and African Horse Sickness. "Farmers are paying a lot of money for deficient vaccines. Vaccines are the most important line of defence in preventing and controlling disease outbreaks [and] farmers are currently vaccinating without confidence."

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