**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 2173**

**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER [No 21-2023 SIXTH PARLIAMENT]
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**2173. Mr N P Masipa (DA) to ask the Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development:**

(1) What (a) is the vacancy rate of veterinary doctors in the Republic in each province from (i) 1 January 2019 up to 31 December 2022 and (ii) since 1 January 2023 and (b) steps has she taken to ensure that vacant positions of veterinarians in areas where there is a high shortage are filled in order to service the livestock;

(2) whether she will furnish Mr N P Masipa with the number of veterinarians and veterinarian nurses who have qualified, but are not employed; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details;

(3) what measures will her department put in place to absorb the unemployed veterinarians and veterinarian nurses to provide animal health services where there is a high need? **NW2469E**

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

(1)(a)(i),(ii) Table 1 below reflects the vacancy rate of veterinary doctors in South Africa per province from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2022 and since 1 January 2023.

Table1: Approved and vacant posts for veterinary doctors

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Year**  | **STATUS** | **NATIONAL**  | **GP** | **NW** | **LP** | **MP** | **KZN** | **FS** | **EC** | **WC** | **NC** | **TOTAL** |
| **2019** | **APPROVED** | 38 | 36 | 39 | 39 | 36 | 27 | 15 | 48 | 30 | 16 | **324** |
| **VACANT** | 13 | 4 | 10 | 10 | 17 | 17 | 3 | 25 | 4 | 10 | **113** |
| **RATE** | 34% | 11.1% | 26% | 26% | 47.22% | 62.96% | 20% | 48% | 13% | 37.5% | **35%** |
| **2020** | **APPROVED** | 38 | 36 | 39 | 39 | 36 | 27 | 15 | 48 | 30 | 16 | **324** |
| **VACANT** | 13 | 4 | 10 | 10 | 15 | 16 | 5 | 26 | 5 | 10 | **114** |
| **RATE** | 34% | 11.1% | 26% | 26% | 41.67% | 59.25% | 33% | 46% | 16% | 37.5% | **35%** |
| **2021** | **APPROVED** | 38 | 36 | 39 | 39 | 36 | 27 | 15 | 48 | 30 | 16 | **324** |
| **VACANT** | 14 | 4 | 10 | 10 | 16 | 16 | 6 | 28 | 5 | 10 | **103** |
| **RATE** | 37% | 11.1% | 26% | 26% | 44.44% | 59,25% | 40% | 42% | 16% | 37.5% | **32%** |
| **2022** | **APPROVED** | 38 | 36 | 39 | 39 | 36 | 29 | 15 | 48 | 30 | 16 | **326** |
| **VACANT** | 14 | 4 | 10 | 10 | 19 | 16 | 6 | 38 | 6 | 11 | **134** |
| **RATE** | 37% | 11.1% | 26% | 26% | 52.78 | 55,17% | 40% | 38% | 20% | 31.25% | **41%** |
| **2023** | **APPROVED** | 38 | 36 | 39 | 39 | 36 | 29 | 15 | 48 | 30 | 16 | **287** |
| **VACANT** | 13 | 4 | 10 | 10 | 20 | 18 | 6 | 31 | 6 | 11 | **129** |
| **RATE** | 34% | 11.1% | 26% | 26% | 55.56% | 62,06% | 40% | 35% | 20% | 31.25% | **45%** |

(b)The Department advertised vacant posts of state veterinarians in line with the available budget. There has been a challenge with constant efflux of state veterinarians who are being recruited by the private sector. In addition, there are also challenges to get suitably qualified applicants.

(2) The number of registered veterinarians and veterinary nurses as per the South African Veterinary Council register of May 2023 is as follows:

- There were 3 506 registered veterinarians (excluding veterinary specialists) and 731 registered veterinary nurses as at 31 May 2023.

- As with all other agricultural and related professions, the Department doesn’t keep records of unemployed graduates as it is not the only employer and it would be impossible to maintain the records throughout the sector. Vacancies are however, advertised as soon as vacated. Recent adverts for veterinarians attracted very few applicants, suggesting that most are absorbed in the sector.

- Mpumalanga is the only province that has employed 18 veterinary nurses out of an establishment of 24 (75% filled).

(3)The following measures are in place for the Department to deal with unemployed veterinarians and veterinary nurses to provide animal health services where there is a high need:

- All bursary holders are subject to servicing the Department for a period equal to the number of years sponsored by the Department.

- Unemployed veterinary graduates are deployed in areas where they are needed the most in the provinces under the Compulsory Community Service Programme for veterinary graduates. This ensures the graduates are employed for a duration of one year. Once they complete their community service the graduates are registered as veterinarians by the South African Veterinary Council and can service their contract with the relevant departments/provinces.

- Vacant funded posts are advertised nationally and prioritise unemployed veterinarians and veterinary nurses. This has proven to be a challenge as there are very few applications. Most veterinarians and veterinary nurses are attracted to the private sector.