**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 221**

**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER [No 2-2023 SIXTH PARLIAMENT]  
DATE OF PUBLICATION: 17 FEBRUARY 2023**

**221. Ms T Breedt (FF Plus) to ask the Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development:**

1. Whether she will furnish Ms T Breedt with a list of the State laboratories of the Department of Agriculture in each province that are (a) currently operational and able to conduct clinical tests and (b) not operational; if not, why not; if so; what are the relevant details;

(2) whether there is a backlog of tests; if not; what is the position in this regard; if so, what is (a) the current backlog, (b) being done to improve the response period and (c) the average waiting period for test results at each laboratory;

(3) whether outsourcing is ever used with regard to the testing at the specified laboratories; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, (a) how much of the work was outsourced since 1 January 2022, (b) what are the financial implications of outsourcing the work and (c) which laboratories were used for outsourcing? **NW225E**

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

(1)(a),(b) Yes. Please refer to Annexure A. The list of approved laboratories and their capabilities (scope of tests) is published on the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development’s (DALRRD) website at: <http://www.dalrrd.gov.za/Branches/Agricultural-Production-Health-Food-Safety/Animal-Health/Epidemiology/Approved-Laboratories>

It should be noted that Government laboratory services is a provincial veterinary mandate. Provinces decide on the location and feasability of maintaining a laboratory as well as the procurement of equipment, reagents and the scope of diagnostic tests. Maintenance of a laboratory that is able to provide diagnostics of an acceptable standard is very expensive; therefore most provinces opt to have only one laboratory. The decision to not provide a service and become inactive is mostly a financial decision, although staff shortages can also play a significant role.

(2) No.DALRRDis not aware of any current backlog in any of the laboratories. SANAS accredited and DALRRD approved laboratories must have a Quality Management System, which also deals with laboratory turn-around time. An average turnaround time for test results at each laboratory is 5 working days but exceptions do exist when test methods may require a longer period to be completed. Examples of these are Tuberculosis and Johne’s disease diagnostics which require a turnaround time of weeks or even months.

(a),(b),(c) Falls away.

1. Yes, some laboratories outsource as not all have the same diagnostic testing scope. Clients are therefore encouraged to ensure that samples are sent to the correct laboratory to minimise the need for outsourcing which could impact on turnaround times and costs. Samples may only be outsourced to laboratories that are accredited and approved for the required diagnostics.
2. The number of samples that were outsourced is not available at national level as it is an agreement between laboratories.
3. Outsourcing will inevitably result in increased costs and longer turnaround times.
4. Currently, all samples sent to the Western Cape Provincial laboratory will be sent to other laboratories as the laboratory is currently being upgraded. Samples are outsourced if specialised diagnostics are required such as sequencing of samples to determine the virus makeup as only a few facilities offer such a specialized and costly service. Examples are Avian Influenza and African Swine Fever. As indicated in (a) above, information on which laboratories were used for outsourcing is not available at national level as it is an agreement between laboratories.

**Annexure A to NA-QUES 221 of 2023**

**STATUS OF GOVERNMENT AND PARASTATAL LABORATORIES**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **No** | **Province** | **Laboratory** | **Laboratory type** | **(1)(a),(b) Currently operational and able to conduct clinical tests and not operational** | **SANAS accreditation** |
| 1 | Western Cape | Department of Agriculture George State Veterinary Office | Government | *Expired/Not active*  - |  |
| 2 | Western Cape | Department of Agriculture Swellendam State Veterinary Office | Government | *Expired/Not active*  - |  |
| 7 | Eastern Cape | Grahamstown Veterinary Laboratory | Government | SANAS Accredited, DAH Approval pending  -  Audit Date: 2019-09-18 |  |
| 8 | Eastern Cape | Middelburg Provincial Veterinary Laboratory | Government | *Expired/Not active*  - |  |
| 9 | Eastern Cape | Queenstown Veterinary Laboratory | Government | SANAS Accredited, DAH Approval pending  - | V0052 |
| 10 | Free State | Bloemfontein Provincial Veterinary Laboratory | Government | *Expired/Not active*  - |  |
| 12 | Free State | Kroonstad Veterinary Laboratory | Government | SANAS Accredited, DAH Approval pending  - | V0044 |
| 24 | Gauteng | NICD Centre of Emerging and Zoonotic Diseases (CEZD) | Government | *Expired/Not active*  - | M0029B |
| 25 | Gauteng | NICD Centre for Respiratory Disease and meningitis (CRDM) | Government | *Expired/Not active*  - | Medical PCR |
| 26 | Gauteng | NICD Special Bacterial Pathogens Reference Laboratory (SBPRL) | Parastatal | *Expired/Not active*  - | Medical Micro |
| 27 | Gauteng | OVI Meat and Bone Meal (MBM) Laboratory | Parastatal | *Suspended*  - |  |
| 29 | Gauteng | ARC-OVI Transboundary Animal Diseases Programme (TADP) | Parastatal | SANAS Accredited, DAH Approval pending  -  Audit Date: 2018-09-07 | V0034 |
| 33 | Gauteng | ARC-OVI Tuberculosis Laboratory | Parastatal | SANAS Accredited, DAH Approval pending  DAH-55  Audit Date: 2023-02-22 |  |
| 34 | Gauteng | ARC-OVI Biotechnology PCR Laboratory | Parastatal | SANAS Accredited, DAH Approval pending  DAH-10  Audit Date: 2023-02-21 | V0001 |
| 35 | Gauteng | ARC-OVI Rabies Laboratory | Parastatal | SANAS Accredited, DAH Approval pending  DAH-02  Audit Date: 2019-04-03 | V0003 |
| 36 | Gauteng | ARC-OVR Virology Laboratory | Parastatal | SANAS Accredited, DAH Approval pending  DAH-46  Audit Date: 2022-09-12 | V0001 |
| 39 | Gauteng | ARC-OVI Bacteriology and Zoonotic Diseases Laboratory | Parastatal | SANAS Accredited, DAH Approval pending  DAH-01  Audit Date: 2023-02-15 | V0003 |
| 40 | Gauteng | ARC-OVI Epidemiology Parasites and Vectors Diseases Diagnostic Laboratory | Parastatal | SANAS Accredited, DAH Approval pending  DAH-30  Audit Date: 2023-02-14 | V0017 |
| 45 | Gauteng | ARC-OVI BSE Laboratory | Parastatal | *Expired/Not active*  DAH-56  Audit Date: 2019-06-27 | V0003 |
| 46 | Gauteng | ARC-OVI Serology Laboratory | Parastatal | SANAS Accredited, DAH Approval pending  DAH-57  Audit Date: 2023-02-16 | V0003 |
| 52 | KwaZulu-Natal | DALRRD Vryheid Veterinary Laboratory | Government | *Suspended*  - | no |
| 54 | KwaZulu-Natal | KZN DARD Allerton Provincial Veterinary Laboratory | Government | SANAS Accredited, DAH Approval pending  DAH-21  Audit Date: 2022-09-22 | V0037 |
| 57 | Limpopo | DALRRD Lephalale Veterinary Laboratory | Government | *Expired/Not active*  - | no |
| 58 | Limpopo | DALRRD Makhado Veterinary Laboratory | Government | *Expired/Not active*  - |  |
| 59 | Limpopo | DALRRD Mokopane Provincial Veterinary Laboratory | Government | *Expired/Not active*  - | no |
| 60 | Limpopo | DALRRD Thulamela/Sibasa Veterinary Laboratory | Government | *Expired/Not active*  - | no |
| 61 | Mpumalanga | DALRRD Ehlanzeni Veterinary Laboratory | Government | *Suspended*  - | no |
| 63 | Mpumalanga | DALRRD Lydenburg Veterinary Laboratory | Government | *Suspended*  - | no |
| 64 | Mpumalanga | Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Land & Environmental Affairs Mpumalanga Provincial Veterinary Laboratory | Government | SANAS Accredited, DAH Approval pending  -  Audit Date: 2023-01-30 | V0041 |
| 66 | Mpumalanga | DALRRD Skukuza Veterinary Laboratory | Government | *Expired/Not active*  - | no |
| 67 | North West | Department of Agriculture and Rural Development Vryburg Veterinary Laboratory | Government | SANAS Accredited, DAH Approval pending  DAH-22  Audit Date: 2022-06-21 | V0038 |
| 68 | North West | Department of Agriculture and Rural Development Potchefstroom Provincial Veterinary Laboratory | Government | SANAS Accredited, DAH Approval pending  DAH-14  Audit Date: 2022-11-02 | V0018 |
| 70 | Northern Cape | Department of Agriculture, Environmental Affairs, Land Reform & Rural Development (DAELR) Northern Cape Provincial Veterinary Laboratory | Government | SANAS Accredited, DAH Approved  DAH-49  Audit Date: 2022-06-21 | V0036 |
| 73 | Western Cape | Western Cape Department of Agriculture Western Cape Provincial Veterinary Laboratory | Government | Voluntary suspension  DAH-29  Audit Date: 2018-10-12 | V0029 |
| 76 | Western Cape | DALRRD Beaufort West Veterinary Laboratory | Government | *Suspended*  - | no |