



SA EQUINE
HEALTH & PROTOCOLS
EXPORTS SOUTH AFRICA

African horse sickness control

Area status declarations

2022

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**Western Cape
Government**
FOR YOU

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Introduction

This is the first report on the use of African horse sickness (AHS) Area Status Declarations (ASD's) in South Africa to assist in the mitigation of the introduction of AHS virus (AHSV) into the AHS controlled area of South Africa. The classification of areas in South Africa as AHS high or low risk has been in place for many years, the former mainly used during the high-risk summer and autumn seasons to prevent the direct movement of equids into the AHS controlled area from South Africa's northern and north-eastern provinces. These areas typically have AHS cases annually during that time. Since the formalisation of the AHS controls through the [AHS Veterinary Procedural notice](#) (VPN) in December 2019, the ASD system was officially implemented in a more systematic and defined manner.

ASD's are the defined AHS risk level by State veterinarians (SV's) and are used by SV Boland (Western Cape) when issuing permits. They fulfill the movement requirements of the VPN by ensuring SV's are involved with movement control and provide a foundational risk evaluation for their respective areas for AHS infection. The high/partial risk profile of an SV area is informed by the following guidelines (generally used in order of importance):

- Confirmation of cases of AHS within an area with the last case occurring within 40 days ([WOAH infectious period for AHS](#)).
- Suspicion of disease where AHS could be considered a differential diagnosis based on deaths and/or clinical signs in a susceptible population.
- Time of year and location: AHS is seasonal based on the vector transmission epidemiology. Colder months are less likely to have AHS cases and cases are known to occur seasonally.
- Proximity to large population/s of equids of unknown AHS status - an example of this would be areas close to the Kruger National Park with their large population of zebra, or proximity to a country border where AHS might be uncontrolled.

- Unexpected weather patterns that may result in higher-than-expected vector populations.
- Higher than usual prevalence of other vector borne arbovirus infections - Equine encephalosis virus infection is an example.

Area status declarations are provided by SV's to SV Boland with the exception of those areas where equids are not moved from. They can be amended by the SV at any point. Since SV Boland receives all laboratory results for AHS, and is engaged with the passive surveillance of AHS in the infected zone, they (SV Boland) can also implement a high-risk status for an SV area based on surveillance, with this status communicated back to the SV of origin. As a rule, an area with an unknown/undefined risk status is considered high risk for movement purposes.

The definitions of various AHS risk status for areas are:

AHS high risk

This is where the disease factors or recent history of a disease precludes direct movement into the AHS controlled area. In this case movements into the controlled area can only take place using mitigated movement protocols like stop-over quarantine or vector protected quarantine at origin.

AHS low risk

The risk of AHS is considered low enough to allow direct movements of horses to the AHS controlled zone. Permits are still required for these movements and all standard movement conditions must be met.

AHS partial risk

This occurs where, due to the season and/or size of SV areas, there are parts of an area that are considered AHS high risk and parts are low risk. Individual movements are evaluated in these cases to determine the proximity to known cases and confirmation is made by SV Boland to the SV of origin prior to the movement pathway that may be undertaken for the movement application. AHS partial risk status is also allocated to areas by SV's where they would like to be consulted on each movement from their area irrespective of the AHS risk. This generally occurs when the SV is uncertain as to the AHS status of an area.

2022 area status declarations

Since each ASD issued has a start and end date the status of each of the 126 State vet areas in the country can be defined daily – area days at risk (ADAR). For the country there were 45990 ADAR for 2022. 23870 of these had a defined area status (52%) during 2022. 11958 ADAR were classified high risk, 26% of the total ADAR and 50% of the classified ADAR. 10073 ADAR were classified low risk, 22% of the total ADAR and 42% of the classified ADAR. 1839 ADAR were classified partial risk, 4% of the total ADAR and 8% of the classified ADAR.

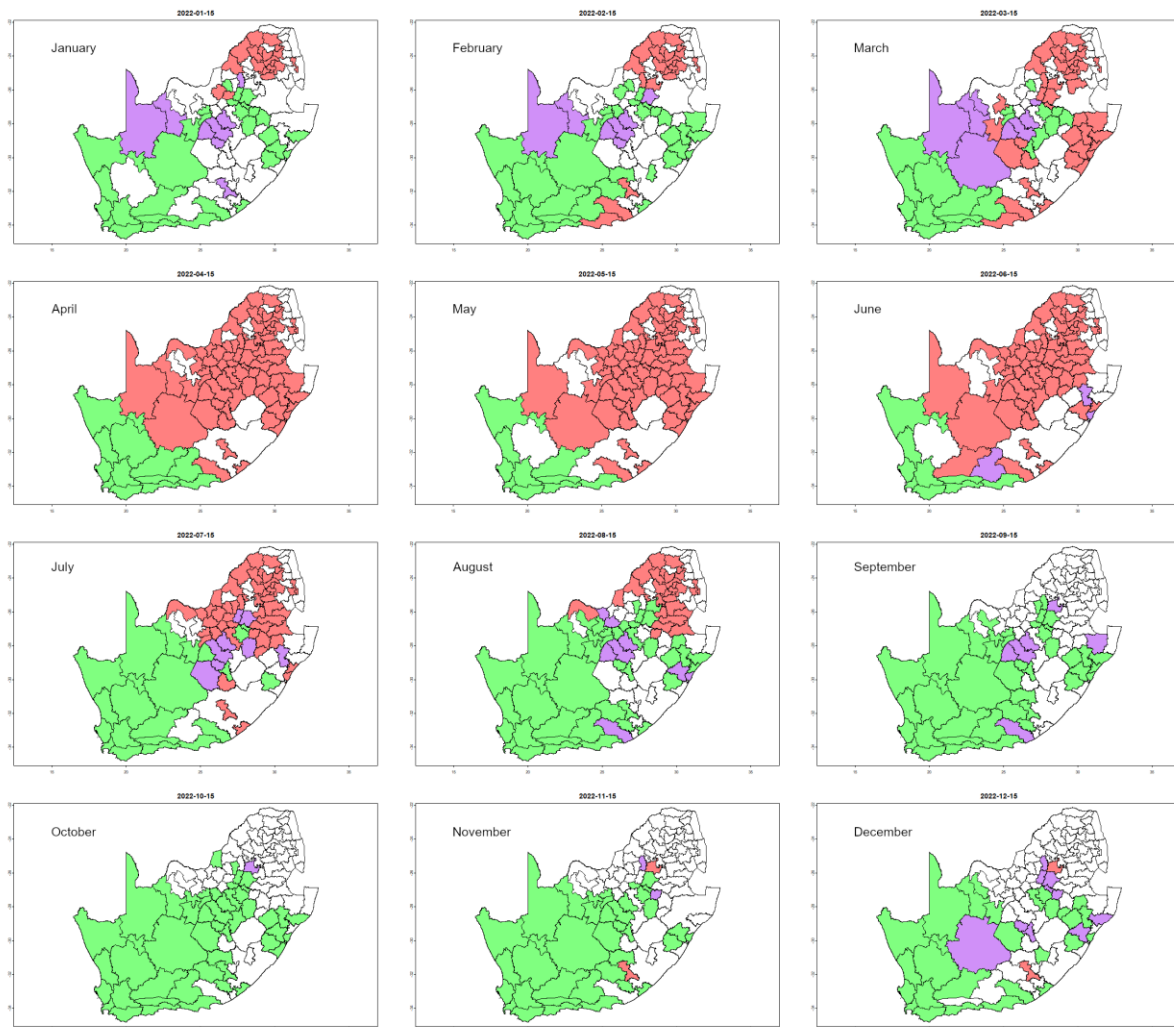


Figure 1: ASD for each SV area on the 15th of each month during 2022. Red indicated high risk, green low risk and purple partial risk. White regions are unknown risk and are effectively high risk for movement purposes.

Figure 1 above depicts the ASD status on the 15th of each month during 2022. This is a generalization of the whole year, but the AHS risk season was prolonged in 2022 with large parts of the country still high risk for movements in June and July, only easing up into August through November. The Western Cape remained generally low risk except for a high-risk status in the Beaufort West region in June 2022 because of confirmed cases. For a visualization of the full daily ASD status of the country please visit [here](#).

Acknowledgements

The South African Equine Health and Protocols NPC are the authorized permit issuing body and as part of this process obtain ASD status information from SV's around the country on behalf of State Veterinary services in the Western Cape. We are grateful to our State Veterinary colleagues across the country for assisting in the controlled movement of equids through the classification of their areas in respect to AHS.