



COMMUNICATION PROTOCOL

Garden Route Multi-Agency Command Centre (MACC) Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) Response

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1. Purpose

This protocol provides a coordinated framework for the drafting, approval, issuing, and dissemination of official statements, media releases, and public communication relating to the Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) response coordinated through the Garden Route Multi-Agency Command Centre (MACC).

Its purpose is to ensure accuracy, consistency, credibility, and alignment across all participating agencies.

2. Governance and Authority

2.1 Lead Authority

The **State Veterinarian from the Western Cape Department of Agriculture** is the lead authority for public communication relating to FMD within the MACC. The State Veterinarian is supported by Agri Western Cape and the Garden Route District Municipality Communicators.

2.2 Operating Framework

The MACC operates under a **formal Incident Command System (ICS)** and **Disaster Management framework**, which governs coordination, information flow, and decision-making.

2.3 Drafting and Sign-off Authority

- All FMD-related communication is drafted by the Communication Manager of the Garden Route District Municipality (GRDM).
- Draft statements are pre-approved by Agri Western Cape.
- Final sign-off authority rests with the State Veterinarian.
- The **Head of Disaster Management: GRDM** plays an advisory and arbitration role but is not required to proofread statements.

2.4 Arbitration of Disputes

In the event of disagreement between agencies regarding messaging, the **Head of Disaster Management: GRDM** will arbitrate and determine the final position.

2.5 Political Office-Bearers

- The **Executive Mayor of GRDM** may issue public statements.
- All such statements must be **fact-checked by the GRDM Communication Manager** prior to publication.
- Political office-bearers may **reshare approved MACC statements**, but may not independently publish technical or operational details.
- The Head of Disaster Management is required to brief the Executive Mayor and any other political principal about the background and status of FMD in the Garden Route and beyond.

3. Spokespersons and Roles

3.1 Designated Spokespersons

- **Primary spokesperson:** State Veterinarian (Western Cape Department of Agriculture)
- **Alternate spokesperson:** Head of Disaster Management, GRDM

3.2 Thematic Spokespersons

- Technical veterinary matters: State Veterinarian
- **Movement control and enforcement:** South African Police Service (designated representative)
- **Disaster management and logistics:** Head of Disaster Management, GRDM
- Political oversight:
 - Executive Mayor (GRDM)
 - Western Cape Minister of Agriculture
 - Premier of the Western Cape
 - Minister of Local Government

3.3 Media Preparedness

All spokespersons will be **briefed by technocrats** prior to any media engagement involving FMD-related matters.

3.4 After-Hours and Weekend Media Queries

- The **GRDM Communication Manager** coordinates all media queries.
- Queries must be submitted via **email**.
- Follow-ups and reminders may be shared via **WhatsApp**, but:
 - No media query may be answered via WhatsApp.
- Response timelines are communicated based on the urgency and publication cycle (daily vs weekly media).

3.5 Non-Designated Officials

If a non-designated official engages with the media:

- The matter will be addressed by the MACC lead agencies.
- Existing institutional policies and disciplinary frameworks remain fully applicable.

4. Statement and Media Release Development

4.1 Responsible Authority

The Garden Route District Municipality is responsible for drafting:

- Media statements
- Media releases
- Media advisories

FAQs and public notices may be drafted by:

- GRDM
- Western Cape Provincial Government
- Agri Western Cape
- Western Cape Department of Agriculture

4.2 Information Classification

Public and releasable information includes:

- Current status of FMD
- Confirmation of new cases (where approved)
- Detection and treatment protocols
- Applicable laws and regulations
- Reporting procedures for suspected cases

Restricted information includes:

- Exact checkpoint locations or maps
- Specific detection sites
- Details of arrests or enforcement actions

Confidential / embargoed information includes:

- Internal logistical arrangements
- Resource constraints or shortages

4.3 Standard Format

All official statements must follow the approved template:

- Title:
Media Statement #[number] – Garden Route Multi-Agency Command Centre
or
Joint Statement: Agri Western Cape and Garden Route District Municipality
- Date (DD Month YYYY)
- Body of statement
- Media enquiry contact details
- Contact details for reporting suspected FMD cases

4.4 Mandatory Elements

Every statement must include:

- Date and time of issue
- Current status update
- Media contact details
- Reporting contact details

4.5 Corrections and Updates

- Corrections are issued as clearly labelled correction statements.
- Updates are numbered sequentially.
- Retractions are issued where necessary following consultation with the State Veterinarian.

5. Approval and Clearance Process

5.1 Workflow

1. Draft statements following MACC meetings or developments
2. Submission to **Agri Western Cape** for pre-approval
3. Final sign-off by the State Veterinarian
4. Dissemination by the GRDM Communication Manager

5.2 Clearance Authorities

Statements must be cleared by:

- State Veterinarian
- Agri Western Cape

5.3 Timeframes

- **Urgent and routine approvals:** within **2 hours**, where operationally feasible.

5.4 Pending Laboratory Confirmation

Statements may be released prior to laboratory confirmation, provided wording clearly reflects:

- “Suspected cases”
- “Under investigation”
- “Pending confirmation”

5.5 Joint Statement Branding

Joint statements are branded and attributed in the following order:

1. Western Cape Government: Agriculture
2. Garden Route District Municipality
3. Agri Western Cape

6. Coordination with Stakeholders

6.1 Information Channels

- **Local municipalities:** WhatsApp groups and email

- **Media:** WhatsApp Media channels and official website
- **Public:** GRDM website, Facebook, municipal applications

6.2 Stakeholder Groups (to be formalised)

- Agricultural unions and producer organisations
- Abattoirs and feedlots
- Traditional leadership structures (where applicable)

6.3 Briefing Protocol

Stakeholders are **not briefed in advance** and receive information **simultaneously** through MACC-approved updates.

6.4 Contradictory Statements

- Communication is centralised.
- Political office-bearers within the district must not issue statements ahead of official MACC communication.
- Contradictions are corrected through the approved central channels.

7. Political Communication Boundaries

7.1 Permitted Political Communication

Political principals may issue statements focusing on:

- Leadership
- Public reassurance
- Support for response efforts

All factual and technical content must be **aligned with and cleared through the MACC**.

7.2 Prohibited Content

Political offices may not publish:

- Unconfirmed cases
- Exact locations
- Logistical shortfalls or resource gaps

7.3 Referencing

All communication must refer to the response structure as the:
“Garden Route Multi-Agency Command Centre”

7.4 Correction of Misstatements

- Addressed directly via telephone or in-person engagement.
- Retractions or clarifications issued where required.

8. Media Engagement

8.1 Logging of Media Queries

All media queries are:

- Received via email
- Logged and reported within the MACC

8.2 Media Contact Point

Primary media contact:

- GRDM Communication Manager

Media may also contact:

- Agri Western Cape
- Western Cape Government (for provincial matters)

8.3 Press Briefings

- No scheduled briefings
- Conducted ad hoc and during escalations only

8.4 Embargoes

Embargoes may be applied by agreement between:

- GRDM Communication Manager
- MACC leadership

8.5 Misinformation

Social media rumours and misinformation are escalated to:

- State Veterinarian
- Agri Western Cape
and addressed through factual, approved communication.

9. Digital and Social Media

9.1 Authorised Platforms

- MACC Facebook posts
- MACC WhatsApp media channels
- GRDM official website
(Foot-and-Mouth Disease document repository)

9.2 Platform Control

- GRDM channels: GRDM communicators
- Local municipal channels: respective municipalities
- Partner agencies: publish on their own platforms

9.3 Resharing vs Rewriting

- Statements may be reshared.
- Rewriting must remain accurate and aligned with approved content.

9.4 Public Engagement

Online engagement is managed with care, factual responses, and a non-alarmist approach.

10. Monitoring, Compliance, and Review

10.1 Compliance Monitoring

The **GRDM Communication Manager** monitors compliance with this protocol.

10.2 Non-Compliance

Non-compliance is escalated to the **relevant stakeholder lead** within the MACC.

10.3 Review

The protocol is reviewed and updated **as required** during the outbreak.

10.4 Post-Incident Review

A formal post-incident communication review is **not currently in place** due to the absence of media monitoring tools. Funding is the central contributing factor.