

MEDIA RELEASE



A single certificate error threatens South Africa's winter oxtail supply

02 July 2026: South Africans could soon pay substantially more for one of the country's favourite winter meals after an administrative error blocked Argentine oxtail imports, which supply the majority of the local market. The Association of Meat Importers and Exporters South Africa (AMIE) is calling on the Department of Agriculture (DoA) to urgently review the current sanitary certificate and restore a practical, scientifically justified route for imports before retailers and consumers feel the full impact.

South Africa imports approximately 70% of its oxtail from Argentina. Local producers cannot supply the cut at the volumes required by the market, particularly during winter, when oxtail stew and potjie remain popular household meals. Importers and retailers are already managing stock carefully, while consumers could face higher prices if supply tightens further.

The impasse began with a reference to Ovine Scrapie in sanitary certificates for bovine products. Ovine scrapie affects sheep and goats, not cattle. Industry stakeholders and Argentine representatives have proposed a straightforward amendment: remove the irrelevant wording from bovine certificates.

Instead, AMIE says the process has become far more complicated. The department introduced a highly complex certificate containing extensive Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) biosecurity requirements that are extremely difficult for exporting countries to meet for bone-in beef products, including oxtail.

"This should have been a simple administrative amendment," says AMIE CEO Paul Matthew. "Ovine scrapie does not apply to cattle, and removing that reference from bovine certificates should not have become a regulatory obstacle of this scale. Argentina has the product, South Africa needs the product, and consumers should not lose access to oxtail because of a certificate issue that can be easily resolved."

Argentina and South Africa have a long-standing relationship in managing and combating FMD. Argentina is one of the source countries for FMD vaccines used in South Africa and has worked extensively with South Africa on FMD management and control frameworks. AMIE says the current impasse is therefore not the result of poor cooperation or inadequate biosecurity controls, but an unnecessarily burdensome administrative process.

Supply pressure builds as contracts are cancelled

The impact on South African supply could be significant. Importers estimate that approximately 1,000 tonnes of oxtail could be lost to the South African market during the winter season, representing more than R100 million worth of product. Importers are reportedly already cancelling winter contracts as they manage stock levels and lead times against an unresolved certification deadline.

MEDIA RELEASE



Matthew notes, “South Africans cannot access a product that South Africa itself cannot produce in sufficient quantities while the imports needed to make up the shortfall remain blocked. Consumers don't care about veterinary certificate wording, but expect affordable food on supermarket shelves. When a straightforward administrative correction turns into months of delay, it's South African families who ultimately pay the price.”

AMIE says it remains committed to constructive engagement and is urgently raising the matter with relevant government officials to seek a practical and expedited resolution. “AMIE fully supports South Africa's biosecurity requirements. Our request is simply that those requirements be scientifically justified, practical to implement, and applied in a way that protects both animal health and South African consumers,” he explains.

The association has engaged directly with the Deputy Director General of Agriculture and initiated contact with the Argentine embassy to accelerate progress.

“This issue is now bigger than one certificate clause, and corrective action must be expedited. This situation serves as yet another example of how unnecessary administrative delays are affecting both South Africa's export ambitions and the availability of affordable imported food.”

ENDS