

SA on high alert for further brown locust outbreaks



AGRI-PULSE – UPINGTON - New outbreaks of the brown locust *Locustana pardalina* have been reported over a wide area of the Central and Upper Karoo in January and February 2021 following good rain.

The initial outbreaks started in late September 2020 in the eastern and south-eastern Karoo and produced large migrating adult swarms in late November 2020 that invaded the south-eastern Free State towards Bloemfontein and threatened to invade Lesotho before being tracked down and controlled.

At the time of writing, the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (agriculture department) confirmed that it was fighting new hopper outbreaks in Hopetown, Steynsburg, Britstown,

Carnarvon, Vosburg, Loxton, Victoria West, Upington, Keimoes and Griekwastad.

Dr Roger Price, research team manager at the Agricultural Research Council, said brown locusts should not be confused with the desert locusts that have decimated crops in Eastern and Northern Africa and formed swarms of up to 400km² in size.

Brown locusts were endemic to the semi-arid Karoo areas of South Africa and southern Namibia, formed smaller swarms and did not produce the same devastating cycles as the desert locusts. "Over the past 40 years, brown locust plagues have occurred in 1985/1986, 1989/1990, 1994/1995, 2002/2001 and 2010/2011. The current outbreak is not yet intense enough to be classified as a

plague, but it is the first major outbreak in the past 10 years," Price says. While no major damage had yet been reported from the current outbreaks, brown locusts could cause extensive damages to crops, with most damage caused to grazing veld, especially in areas with poorer-quality veld where the locusts were in direct competition with sheep for forage. Swarms escaping from the Karoo could also cause damage to maize and sorghum crops in the Free State and beyond.

Price said that an outbreak was to be expected sometime around now, due to the Karoo and various other parts of the country suffering consecutive droughts over the past few years, followed by good early summer rain in 2020. "The droughts have led to a build-up

of solitary locust populations and dormant locust egg deposits over a wide area, which have now hatched and multiplied thanks to the rainfall and resulting abundance of forage. The biggest problem we have with locust control at the moment is that outbreaks are so widespread in the remote Karoo areas that the delay in communication between farmers reporting locusts and the locust spray teams being able to find the locust targets allows some locust outbreaks to escape," Price says.

Farmers were urged to report outbreaks as soon as possible to their local District Locust Officer or to the agriculture department's locust depots at De Aar and Upington.

By Glenneis Kriel
(Farmers' Weekly, February 10 2021)



Farmers' union: Why should you join?

AGRI-PULSE – PRETORIA - South African farmers have organised themselves into a strong, united agricultural front, with Agri SA as apex organisation acting as mouthpiece for all farmers at national level, with the purpose of ensuring the best possible financial and social position for the farmer within the national economy.

Apart from representing farmers' interests as such, Agri SA is also the voice of the strong and sophisticated agricultural movement in South Africa as the cooperatives also form part of the movement. This situation is largely unique but makes good sense in that both the farmers' organisations as such and the agricultural cooperatives are organised and controlled by farmers to promote their interests.

The objectives of the farmers and of their cooperatives are therefore the same and the concentration of farmers and their cooperatives in the same organisation further strengthens organised agriculture, to the benefit of the entire farming community. A farmer can become a member of organised agriculture in different ways. Normally he joins a local farmers' organisation – the foundation of organised agriculture – which is affiliated to a provincial agricultural union and which in turn is affiliated to Agri SA. The farmers' associations act in regard to local matters and the provincial unions coordinate matters at provincial level and make recommendations regarding national matters to Agri SA.

There are also a number of special commodity organisations, which are affiliated to either the provincial agricultural unions or direct to Agri SA. Examples of these are organisations for grain producers, wool growers, sugar-cane growers, poultry producers, timber growers and vegetable and fruit producers.

Agri SA recently restructured itself (and changed its name from the South African Agricultural Union) in three substructures. i.e.:

- the Provincial Chamber to accommodate the provincial agricultural unions affiliated to Agri SA;
- the Commodity Chamber to accommodate commodity organisations affiliated to Agri SA;
- the Agricultural Business Chamber to accommodate approximately 90 cooperatives and agri-business associates of Agri SA.

General policy matters are handled by Agri SA's Annual Congress – which is also the highest authority in the organisation – and by

the General Council and Executive Committee. The three substructures mentioned are all represented in the Congress, General Council and Executive Committee.

The Agricultural Business Chamber has its own congress (bi-annual) council and executive committee. The members of the Provincial Chambers each have their own annual congresses as well as general councils and executive committees. Likewise the members of the Commodity Chamber each have their own structure with annual or bi-annual congresses, general councils and executive committees.

Agri SA's structures of authority are supported by twelve functional committees. The small three-man committees are elected annually on the basis of expertise and knowledge and not on representativeness. Each committee is administered and managed by a functionary who has expert knowledge in the specific field. The twelve functional areas handled by the the committees are:

- Agricultural Marketing Trade and Industry
- Labour Affairs
- Economic Affairs
- Land Affairs
- Safety and Security
- Communication
- Farmer Development
- Development and Transfer of Technology
- Water Affairs
- Constitutional Development
- Environmental Affairs
- Training.

Agri South Africa is fully representative of farmers of all races and is as such recognised at Government level as mouthpiece of the farming community and the organisation is regularly consulted regarding all matters affecting farmers and the agricultural sector.

The Functional Committee on Farmer Development gives particular attention to the needs of emerging farmers.

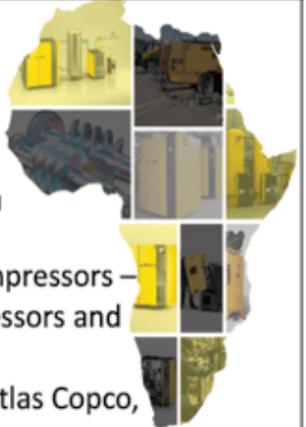
Agri South Africa also represents agriculture on a number of official bodies such as the National Economic Development and Labour Council, National Training Council, Agricultural Research Council, etc, as well as on international bodies such as the International Federation of Agricultural Producers and the Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions.

(Information: AgriSA)



The brown locust is endemic to South African and southern Namibia, and must not be confused with the desert locust that was decimating crops in East and North Africa. Photo: Dr Roger Price

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