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SOUTH KOREA HIT BY FOOT-AND-MOUTH OUTBREAK

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South Korea's President Lee Myung-Bak urged the military on Thursday to help more in the battle against the country's worst-ever outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease, after half a million animals were culled.

"I know the military is already offering active support (in slaughtering the animals), but I want more cooperation from the military", he told cabinet members.

Lee also urged the military to "cooperate when the outbreak spreads to new other regions" and all related government agencies to offer "special treatment for those involved in culling efforts".

More than 60 cases have been reported across the nation since November 29, forcing the culling of more than 500,000 cattle, pigs and other cloven-hoofed animals and causing estimated losses of 400 billion won (\$A344.67 million).

About 160,000 animals were killed during the previous worst outbreak in 2002.

In a desperate attempt to curtail the spread of the disease, the government on Saturday launched vaccinations for some 56,000 cattle.

It takes longer for a country that uses vaccinations to regain disease-free status from the World Organisation for Animal Health than when the disease is curbed solely by culling.

Previous outbreaks in January and April last year cost more than 250 billion won and left nearly 50,000 animals slaughtered.

Foot-and-mouth disease affects cloven-hoofed animals such as cattle, pigs, deer, goats and sheep.