

Museveni (centre), with a delegation from South Africa's First Family and MTN Uganda chairperson Charles Mbire (fourth-right) after a meeting at State House, Entebbe on Monday. The Ramaphosas were in the country to attend the marriage ceremony of Andile Ramaphosa and a relative of former Prime Minister Amama Mbabazi. PPU photo



Three die from suspected anthrax in Arua, Kiruhura

By Gerald Tenywa

Three people and 24 head of cattle have died after a suspected outbreak of anthrax in Arua, West Nile, Kiruhura in western Uganda and Kween in the Elgon region, according to the agriculture ministry.

The outbreak

The outbreak was first reported in Arua a month ago. Two weeks ago, it was reported in Kween while in Kiruhura, it was reported about a week ago.

"The outbreaks have resulted in human and animal death," said Dr Juliet Sentubwe, the agriculture ministry director for animal resources, in a situation report on

Uganda regarding regard to anthrax.

The report was sent on May 18, to the OIE-World Organisation for Animal Health in Paris, France.

The commissioner for animal health in the agriculture ministry, Anna Rose Ademun, is currently in France and was not available for comment yesterday.

Sources said Ademun and Sentubwe were attending a meeting at the OIE-World Organisation.

"The effect must be bigger than what was reported," said Dr Sylvia Angubua Baluka, the president of Uganda Veterinary Association, adding that anthrax does not have an incubation period.

Baluka, who is also a lecturer in the College of Veterinary Medicine at

Makerere University, said there was need for public awareness in order to control the spread of the disease.

"The problem with anthrax is that it does not have an incubation period and it kills its victims in a short time," she said.

Causes

According to medical reports, anthrax is caused by bacteria, *Bacillus anthracis*, an organism that derives its name from the Greek word for coal.

Baluka described the bacteria as dormant, pointing out that it forms spores in the soil when conditions are not favourable.

"It becomes active during the rainy season," she said, adding that some

animals pick it as they graze.

Baluka also said animals also carry the bacteria in their hooves.

She warned people against eating carcasses of animals that have been found dead.

Caution

Baluka said people should be wary of animals that die without any signs of sickness. She said they should not touch the carcass and they should dispose of it with the help of a veterinary doctor.

She also said any severe bleeding from the anus, mouth and nostrils as well as the ears should be reported to health authorities – veterinary doctor for animals and medical doctors in case of humans.