

Lyantonde farmers urged to buy anthrax vaccines

BY WILSON KUTAMBA

LYANTONDE. Veterinary authorities in Lyantonde District have urged livestock farmers to buy anthrax vaccines privately instead of waiting for limited government supplies.

The district is battling an anthrax outbreak that has claimed dozens of cattle and several human lives, heightening fears of further transmission.

Dr Ronald Bameka, the District Veterinary Officer, said the government recently delivered 10,000 doses of anthrax vaccine, but the consignment falls far short of the district's needs.

"Lyantonde has about 200,000 cattle, 180,000 goats and 20,000 sheep — all susceptible to anthrax. The 10,000 doses we received are not enough," Dr Bameka said on Wednesday.

He urged farmers to work with sub-county veterinary officers to procure vaccines available on the private market.

"We encourage farmers who can afford it to purchase vaccines and protect their herds instead of waiting. The vaccines are accessible and effective," he added.

The outbreak, confirmed by the Ministry of Health in mid-February, has affected several sub-counties, with Kasagama emerging as the epicentre.

Dr Denis Monday, the Kasagama Sub-county veterinary officer, said eight cows died this week alone, bringing the total livestock deaths in the area to 28.

"We have advised farmers with the means to buy vaccines under veterinary supervision and immunise their animals immediately," he said.

Dr Monday noted that unlike Foot-and-Mouth Disease vaccines, which are often scarce, anthrax vaccines are available and relatively affordable.

"A 100ml bottle costs about Shs100,000 and can vaccinate 50 cows. That is a small price compared to losing an animal worth Shs3 million to Shs4 million," he explained.

Mr Ezra Bwebale Mugenyi, the district secretary for production and a livestock farmer, backed the call for private vaccination.

"This is our livelihood. While the government is working to secure more vaccines, farmers who can manage should not wait," he said.

The outbreak has also affected humans. Health authorities have confirmed cases linked to handling carcasses or consuming meat from animals that died suddenly. Residents have been warned against slaughtering or eating meat from suspected cases.

Mr Kenneth Mugisha, a local farmer, appealed for support to vulnerable households. "Government should assist farmers who cannot afford vaccines, especially in high-risk areas," he said.

Resident District Commissioner David Asaba Nkojo emphasised the need for vigilance.

"Farmers must vaccinate where possible, report sudden animal deaths and cooperate with veterinary teams. Community action is critical to prevent further losses," he said.