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# Set up meat labs to avoid risks, veterinary doctors tell govt

**KAMPALA.** Veterinary experts have warned that speculation over the safety of meat will remain a contentious matter if the government does not invest in and scatter laboratories in urban towns where rapid tests are conducted before the animal products are released to the consumers.

The veterinarians under their umbrella body: Uganda Veterinary Association (UVA) made the call during a joint press conference at their offices in Kampala as they responded to claims that meat being sold at butchereries was treated with dangerous chemicals.

The public has in the last two weeks been in a state of anxiety after media reports that some of the butchereries around Kampala use dangerous chemicals such as formalin and hydrogen peroxide to preserve meat.

Dr Sylvia Baluka, the UVA

president, said much as the veterinary services of the government include visually inspecting and stamping the meat at the abattoirs, there is need for upgrading the system to laboratory tests before meat is released to consumers.

“The concern currently may be about the meat but we say there is need to address all animal products. The government should establish laboratories in different urban towns so that meat is tested for all disease risks before leaving the abattoir. The same should be done to the other animal products such as milk,” Dr Baluka said.

She said if the systems are not strengthened to meet the international standards, the

consumers of animal products will remain at risk of diseases.

Prof George Nasimyama, a food safety specialist, said much as there is an ongoing operation against the bad practices in the butchers, it may not yield results because such chemicals should have already been hidden.

He said in the absence of the laboratories, the veterinary doctors should use the available laws to detain suspicious meat to be able to carry out tests where applicable or incinerate it so that it is not smuggled into the public.

Prof Francis Ejobi from the Makerere University College of Veterinary Medicine said food safety is a responsibility

of every Ugandan, adding that people have been looking on when the animals are transported badly, which impacts on the quality of meat.

When contacted about the issue, the acting director of resources at the ministry of Agriculture, Dr Juliet Sentumbwe, told *Daily Monitor* that the ministry is constrained by low budgetary allocations, something that has hindered plans to establish regional laboratories.

“We don’t have enough laboratories but there are plans to have them at regional level. However, the budget allocations do not permit us to do so and I cannot commit on when we shall establish them,” Dr Sentumbwe said.