

Editor's note

Unite to share the benefits in agriculture

One of the challenges in the agriculture sector in Uganda is the belief that a farmer can work alone and develop. In most developed countries, farmers work together at all levels.

In today's issue, the lead story is on Gulu Women Dairy farmers, who over 10 years ago decided to combine efforts to develop. When they received a heifer individually after the long war in the north, each of them produced an average 7 litres of milk per day. As an individual, this was very small and could not attract serious clients. They combined the milk and sold it as a group.

Today, collectively, the group members have about 300 dairy cattle and daily milk production stands at 3,000 litres. They have built a milk processing plant, which has helped them add value to the milk.

Farmers should borrow a leaf from this kind of co-operation. They should adopt co-operation

rather than personal enrichment so as to improve their livelihoods.



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A clean psty. African swine fever is highly contagious and therefore, farmers should maintain high levels of hygiene

How to control incurable

By Joshua Kato

With a herding stick in one hand, a cloth wrapper in the other, Amos Turyamununga, whistles away as he looks after his cattle, a few metres off Kaguta Road. In this part of the cattle corridor, ranchers worry about East Coast Fever, a disease caused by ticks.

"I have lost many cattle to East Coast Fever, so I can call it the HIV/AIDS of cattle," Turyamununga, a rancher in Kiruhura district says. Kiruhura borders Isingiro and Rakai districts, two areas which were the cradle of ECF in the late 1980s.

East Coast Fever is probably the most dangerous livestock disease in Africa, causing an annual loss of 1.1 million cattle and \$168m (about sh60b) every year. The disease is also found in Sudan, South Africa, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Tanzania and Kenya. Just like HIV, ECF does not have a proven effective cure and if control measures are not taken, it can wipe out herds.

How East Coast Fever is spread

East Coast Fever is spread through vectors such ticks when they feed on infected cattle.

According to Dr Khalid Kirunda, a veterinarian officer, in Mbarara, ticks are common in the cattle corridor. Kirunda who has done research on ticks and East Coast Fever, says the high prevalence of the vectors makes the disease the leading cause of mortality among cattle.

Signs and diagnosis

■ Mortality can be up to 100%, with death occurring about 18-30 days after the initial attachment of infected ticks.

■ Clinical signs for diagnosis include fever and enlarged lymph nodes near the tick bites. Others include, frothy nasal discharge, diarrhoea, pulmonary oedema, leukopenia, and anaemia.

Kirunda says infected cattle given medication sometimes recover or death follows due to blocked capillaries. Cattle that recover from the disease become carriers.

Treatment and control

Just like HIV, controlling the spread of the disease is the main option.

"We spray livestock regularly because of the fear of East Coast Fever," Col. Dick Bugingo, a rancher in Kiruhura. Bugingo and many other farmers have constructed spray races or dips to



tend off ticks.

Fighting East Coast Fever relies on tick control. Control of ticks is a major concern in Uganda, with large livestock populations.

"Pesticides (acaricides) are mixed in dipping baths or spray races, in which cattle pass to kill the ticks," Kirunda says. Spray races should be done at least three times a year.

In recent years, however, ticks have gained resistance to some of the acaricides. "Resistance may be as a result of the farmers over using or underusing the acaricide a situation that helps ticks gain immunity," Kirunda says. Kirunda says ranchers must follow the recommended applications and seek services of qualified veterinary officers, before they apply the pesticide. Genuine acaricides can only be got from certified agri-inputs dealers.

African swine fever

Stanley Mugisha a resident of Nakitoma, Nakasongola district, says he lost 10 pigs in three days to African swine fever.

"If there is a disease that resembles HIV in pigs, it is swine fever. The only difference is that it kills faster," he says. The disease is referred to as African swine fever because it is more prevalent in pigs on the African continent.

African swine fever is a highly contagious viral disease and there is no known treatment. It is the leading killer of pigs in the world. It manifests through fever, nasal and mouth discharge, loss of appetite, weakness and quick death.

In the past two years, it has affected pigs in Wakiso, Luwero, Mbarara, Kampala, Rakai and Muhende, in Busoga and across Teso.

According to Dr Joseph Kizito, an Agri-vet in Bulemezi in Nakaseke district, when swine fever strikes a piggy, chances are high that the farmer will lose all the pigs because the it has no cure and spreads very fast.

"I had 800 pigs in my pigsty and the business was quite good, until that day swine fever

Preventing African swine fever

■ Rear pigs within an enclosure to limit their contact with the outside world.
■ Swine fever can be transmitted if the animals get into contact with products of other pigs. Do not allow your pigs to feed on anything that has pig products.
■ In many farms, the disease is transmitted by farm workers who eat infected pork. Farmers must, therefore, make sure that no pork is brought onto their farms.

■ Disinfecting feet of the people entering the piggy is mandatory. The disinfecting basin or foot-bath should be placed at the entrance. The basin is a mixture of a disinfectant such as bleach. In addition, have special wear such as gumboots and overalls for whoever is getting into the piggy.

■ Do not give uncooked food such as cassava or potato peelings to the pigs, especially if they contain pork left overs.

■ If swine fever strikes your farm, slaughter all affected animals and bury the remains far away from the farm. You should also bury them at least six feet deep in order to stop incidences where they are exhumed by other predators. After that, disinfect the piggy where the affected pigs used to be kept.

■ Overall, cleanliness and protecting of your animals from any exposure will keep the disease away.

Do not be tempted to eat the carcass. A small bone from a dead infected pig can easily destroy a farm.

According to Dr Emma Naluyima, a pig farmer, cleanliness and bio-control keeps the disease away.

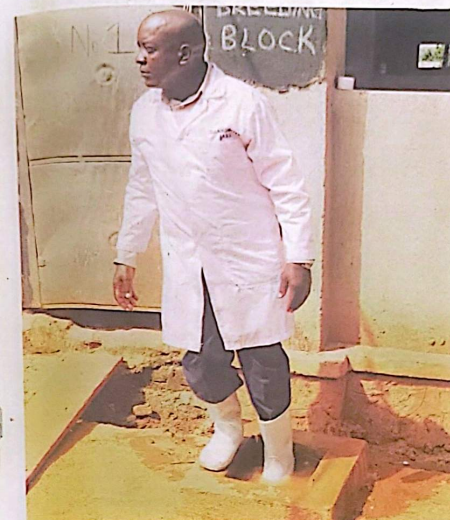
struck. In just a short time, nearly all the pigs were dead." Roger Kyeeyune Nkunyinyi, the director of Muva farm on Mityana Road says. Kizito explains that the disease can be spread by anything or anybody.

"It can, for example, be spread from pig to pig, it can be spread by humans to pigs too, it can



A cow going through a spray race. This treatment should be done regularly to control infestation of ticks

diseases in livestock



A farmer disinfects himself before entering the pigsty

also be spread through the air," he says. For example, if a person visits a piggy with animals suffering from swine fever, they will spread it to the next piggy he visits.

Newcastle disease

"My chicken are dying. Last evening, I lost 100 out of 1,000 and by the end of the day, I had lost 500 birds," Sarah Sekitto, a veterinary officer, working in Nakaseke district who owns a farm in Semuto lamented.

A quick look at the appearance of the

like HIV, the disease has got no known cure.

According to the agriculture ministry, the value of chicken lost to Newcastle disease in Uganda per year is estimated to be over \$62m (about sh225b).

"Newcastle is the highest killer of chicken in the country," Mutalya says. The disease is spread through the air, contact between affected poultry and by humans who carry it from other areas into poultry houses.

Vaccination is key

"Keeping Newcastle and other chicken diseases at bay calls for vaccination as one of the best preventive measures," Robert Serwanga, a farmer and poultry management researcher says. The Newcastle vaccines, just like all the other vaccines is sensitive. This is why it has to be kept under a given temperature and handled carefully for it to remain effective.

It is sold in liquid form. It should be kept under a storage temperature of around 30-37 degrees Celsius for three days and if it stays longer, it should be kept at 22-29 degrees Celsius for two weeks.

The vaccine should be transported under proper cold conditions. For instance, it should be put in a cool box. When it comes to application, put one drop in one of the chicken's eyes.

All chicken regardless of their age should be vaccinated. Revaccinate the birds every four months. Serwanga also says every farmer must take effective bio-safety measures to prevent the disease from entering the chicken house.

"Make sure that whoever comes to your poultry house of completely disinfected. In large farms, for example, in Europe, farms have even got a section where visitors take baths using disinfectants, before they are given disinfected clothes to put on," he says. Serwanga called on farmers in Uganda to enforce the same measures.

Of course, there are other diseases affecting cattle, pigs and chicken, but the three – East Coast Fever, Newcastle disease and African swine fever – are arguably the deadliest, that are nearly similar to the fear created among humans when they are diagnosed with HIV.



Keep cattle healthy through proper feeding

Tips to keep cattle healthy

Environment

Provide a comfortable, hygienic and safe environment for all dairy animals. Adopt measures such as clearing the bushes on the farm to prevent parasitic infestations.

Nutrition

Ensure calves consume adequate colostrums. Provide ample amounts of clean drinking water. Give animals enough feed to allow for maintenance, growth, pregnancy weight gain and lactation. Adjust feed quantities to ensure that animals are not too thin/fat. Ensure that feeding is balanced for energy and protein and supplement with minerals and vitamins.

Vaccination

Vaccinate animals against diseases prevalent in the area. Follow up with booster vaccines where required.

Parasite control

Regular deworming (every three months) should be done. Control tick infestation through regular spraying, at least once a week or otherwise depending on the acaricides in use.

■ Movement of animals Do not bring sick animals into the farm or animals from an area infested with disease. Observe quarantine regulations. When purchasing new stock, ensure that the animal is healthy and has had any necessary vaccinations before moving onto your farm.

■ Treatment of diseases Observe animals regularly for abnormalities and seek advice/treatment from qualified persons. Cull the animals with chronic infections not responding to treatment e.g. chronic mastitis.

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