

OPINION

Livestock institute relocation necessary

The Government has decided to relocate the National Livestock Resources Research Institute (NaLIRRI) from Tororo to Maruzi ranch in Apac district.

While the decision is legitimate given the industrial project to be established in the area, it has, however, been received with evident misgivings by some residents and staff of the institute. This is understandable since the institute has been in the area for more than six decades.

NaLIRRI owes its origins to the colonial era when the East African Trypanosomiasis Research Organisation (EATRO) was founded in 1956 with a mandate to conduct research on tsetse flies and trypanosomiasis in both human and animals across Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania under the jurisdiction of the East African Common Services Organisation, which later became the East African Community.

The location of the institute in Tororo (then southern part of Bukedi) was certainly more of necessity rather than choice. It followed a severe outbreak of sleeping sickness in 1901 in Uganda, especially along the shores and on the islands of Lake Victoria with a high population density.

It is estimated that over 200,000 inhabitants of the region died of the disease. It also led to mass migration of populations away from the lake shores. Resettlement occurred in the 1970s to 1980s.

EATRO was eventually handed over to Uganda Government in 1977 after the collapse of the East African Community and was renamed Uganda Trypanosomiasis Research Organisation (UTRO).

In 1992, UTRO was merged with the then Animal Health Research Centre at Entebbe to form the Livestock Health Research Institute (LIRI) to handle livestock health and theriogenology, including sleeping sickness in man. As the research institute is relocated, quick steps should be taken to ensure its functions are not compromised. It still has several research outposts on the lake shores, especially in Lugala. The control of tsetse fly remains critical to livestock farmers in East Africa.

The institute relocation to Apac will no doubt be costly. The Government should, therefore, provide adequate funds for the relocation of the institute to Maruzi. The Government also needs to sensitise the population to appreciate and support the relocation as well as the industrial plant to be established in Tororo.

New Vision