

Use spray race to control ticks

Farming solutions

By Pressy Nandudu

Ticks and tick-borne diseases are threatening livestock in most parts of the country, especially the cattle corridor districts of Sembabule, Kibaha, Nakasongola and Karamoja.

As a result of tick-borne diseases, revenue collected from weekly animal markets in these districts is at risk of reducing.

For example, Sembabule's monthly revenue collection report shows that between January and June, livestock markets contributed sh225m, nearly half of the sh478m overall revenue collection in the district.

However, this amount is set to decrease due to tick-borne diseases, according to Ronald Katende, the Sembabule district revenue officer.

Ticks are controlled by the use of acaricides.

Acaricides are pesticides that kill ticks and mites, which attack livestock.

Experts in animal husbandry say controlling ticks can curb 70% of tick-borne diseases.

However, there have been complaints from farmers that acaricides on the market are no longer effective in controlling ticks. This has been blamed on their abuse and misuse, leading to resistance of the ticks to the pesticides.

Another argument is that most of the acaricides and other agro inputs are fake.

Ticks also transmit diseases, such as East Coast fever and heartwater, which has affected milk productivity.

Common signs of tick-borne diseases include loss of blood in cattle. This can be detected when an animal loses appetite and is generally weak, evident in its lagging behind when moving in a group.

If forced to run, such a cow will stagger and struggle to breathe. Others may collapse and die.

In the advanced stages of pregnancy, milk production in such dairy cows drops, according to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

At a recent farmers' field day in Sembabule district, farmers appealed to the Government to tighten control over the agro inputs market to prevent the sale of fake products.

The event, which was organised by Fresh Dairy, was targeted at bringing together dairy farmers and service providers along the value chain, with the aim of increasing milk production. Participants also included suppliers of animal feeds,



A spray race has a reservoir tank and a water pump. Photo by Shamim Saad

milking machines, feed supplements.

Experts trained them on how to manage pests and diseases and preserve feeds for a rainy day, among others.

During the event, one of the technologies farmers were introduced to was a spray race.

Previously, farmers in most parts of the country, used dip tanks to control pests and diseases among their animals, according to Dr Julius Tuhumwire of Kwekwe Pharmacy Uganda Limited.

However, the challenge with dips include; not all sizes of cattle would go through the structures. In addition, the dip tanks were costly, going for over sh100m, which is not sustainable for an average Ugandan farmer.

"Therefore, we adopted the spray race from South Africa. The spray race has 42 nozzles. If well-utilised, it can spray between 50 to 100 animals in four hours," Tuhumwire said.

Structure of spray race

The spray race has galvanised pipes, brass nozzles and a tough tarpaulin.

"The size of spray races varies, depending on the farmer's preference. One can start with a spray race of five, three or two metres long, depending on the size of the animals," Tuhumwire explained.

He added that for the case of local breeds, such as the Ankole cattle, a bigger structure is needed, while Friesians and Borans need smaller races.

The spray race can also be adjusted to accommodate small animals that are also affected by ticks, such as goats and sheep.

How it works

The structure comes with a reservoir tank and a water pump, with a holding capacity of 1,000 litres of water.

The pump is used when spraying the acaricide. When mixed with the acaricide, it can spray up to 100 head of cattle. For 200 head of cattle, the mixture can only be effective up to two weeks, since the system recycles water.

After the recycled mixture

has been used, it should be disposed of and the reservoir refilled with clean water.

"Ensure there is a foot bath before the animal enters the spray race and a drainage race after the animal has been sprayed. If you have 200 animals, the mixture can be reused for two weeks," Tuhumwire said.

Why you must spray

Spraying prevents disease outbreaks caused by flies,

Recycled water efficacy

For every set of animals that go through the spray race, a farmer should add some acaricide. This depends on the type of pesticide they are using. For example, when using Milbitraz (also known as Amitraz), for every 100 animals that go through the spray race, a farmer should add 200ml to the initial 1,000 litres of water to cater for the stripping effect. When preparing for the first round of spraying, a farmer is advised to add four litres of Milbitraz to 1,000 litres of water. Then, after every 100 animals, 200ml is added for the mixture to remain effective. For more efficacy, the farmer must cement the holding kraal, have a good foot bath as well as keep the drainage race clean. The spray race costs about sh21m.

FEEDBACK

'Make it affordable'

Make the spray race affordable for farmers. Do not increase its price simply because farmers are in need of a solution to get rid of the ticks. There is a tendency for suppliers of such equipment to hike prices due to the demand, making it difficult for the would-be beneficiaries to gain.

John Gethi, director of milk procurement at Fresh Dairy

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