

Panic as African swine fever sweeps across Masaka

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MASAKA. The African swine fever, which was earlier reported in Kimaanya-Kyabakuza Sub-county, has now spread to the entire Masaka Municipality.

The district deputy veterinary officer, Dr Mukasa Kirumira, told *Saturday Monitor* in an interview on Tuesday that more pigs have died in the villages of Gayaza, Kingo, Kabukolwa and Kyalubu, all in the municipality.

Last week, the district veterinary department revealed that 300 pigs had died of the disease at one farm in Mwalo village, Kimannya-Kyabakuza Division.

He said although they had initially imposed a quarantine

on the movement of pigs in and out of Kimannya-Kyabakuza Division to contain the spread of the disease, some farmers have continued to sell their animals to people outside the quarantine for fear of making losses.

"We are also puzzled by the way the disease is killing pigs. If it spreads to your farm, chances of remaining with a healthy pig are minimal."

MUKASA KIRUMIRA, DISTRICT DEPUTY VETERINARY OFFICER

Dr Kirumira advised farmers to wash pigsties daily with Jik and other disinfectants.

"Veterinary experts are still moving around the affected areas to talk to pig farmers, and establish how many pigs have so far died," he said.

Saturday Monitor has learnt

that Mr Edward Waligo, a farmer in Gayaza village in Kimannya-Kyabakuza Division, lost all his seven pigs, while a youth group - Gayaza Youth Association for Development, also lost 10 pigs on the farm and sold off others.

Mr Charles Ssewanyana, the Greater Masaka multi-stake pig association chairperson, said they are scared that the outbreak could wipe out their animals and asked government to intervene swiftly.

Piggery is a major activity in Uganda and one of the main sources of economic livelihoods for many households. Masaka is the leading producer of pigs in Uganda followed by Kamuli District, according to Dr Kirumira.

For an indigenous pig breed, the least one can earn is Shs120,000 while a cross-breed

fetches about Shs300,000 within six months.

In 2015, pig farmers in Masaka District suffered an outbreak of African swine fever, and worst hit was Kabonera Sub-county and its areas of Kabonera 'B', Kiziba, Kasanje and Kyamuyimbwa, and parts of Rakai District.

About the disease

African swine fever is spread by a virus with a double-stranded DNA genome transmitted by arthropods

The virus causes a lethal haemorrhagic disease in domestic pigs and is endemic to Africa.

The disease also exists in the wild through a cycle of infection between ticks and wild pigs, bush pigs and warthogs. Symptoms include shivering and breathing abnormally.