

Quarantine. Early last month, Namutumba District veterinary health officials issued a quarantine for all animals following an outbreak of foot and mouth disease in some parts of the district.

Meat prices soar due to foot and mouth disease outbreak

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NAMUTUMBA. The prices of meat and dairy products have taken an unprecedented rise due to an outbreak of foot and mouth disease in the sub-counties of Namutumba Rural and Bulange in Namutumba District.

The government early last month imposed a ban on movement of live-stock and selling of animal products such as meat and milk in areas hit by foot and mouth disease.

The ban has now prompted butchers to increase the prices of meat due to cattle shortage.

Mr Peter Maganda, a meat seller in Bugobi Trading Centre, Bulange Sub-county attributes the increase of meat prices to the scarcity of cattle and high operational costs of transporting them.

He says while they purchase the cattle from Teso, Lango, Moroto and Bugisu sub-regions at affordable prices, truck drivers overcharge them because of the distance.

"We would have no reason to increase the price of meat if truck drivers were charging us less for transport," he said.

Prices

A random survey through markets reveals that the price of meat in Bugobi Trading Centre has increased to Shs9,000 from Shs7,000 per kg while goat meat is currently selling at Shs13,000 from Shs10,000 per kg.

In Bulange Sub-county, a kilogramme of meat goes for Shs11,000 from Shs7,000 while goat meat is sold at Shs13,000 up from Shs11,000.

In Namutumba Sub-county, a kilogramme of beef goes for Shs13,000 from Shs7,000, while goat meat is sold at Shs14,000 from Shs11,000 per kg.

In Magada Sub-county, a kilogramme of beef costs Shs8,500 from Shs7,000 while goat meat is sold at Shs12,000 from Shs8,000.

Ms Betty Nangobi, a cattle trader fears that the price might exceed the Shs20,000 mark by Christmas if the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Industry fails to curb the disease.

She said this will also affect the district local revenue collections got from the sale of animals since few will have been slaughtered.

Mr Ivan Magumba, a meat seller in Kibaale Trading Centre, said the price of meat would not have increased if the disease had not broken out in the district.

According to Dr Samuel Kibwika, the Namutumba Sub-county veterinary officer, many farmers are worried because the disease is killing their animals daily.

"So far, 40 per cent of the 500 cattle that tested positive for foot and mouth disease have died," he said.

Authorities speak out

While some leaders plotted to call off the quarantine, Namutumba Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), Mr



Buying meat. A customer buys meat at a butcher in kampala recently. The outbreak of foot and mouth disease has led to increase of meat prices in Namutumba District.
PHOTO BY RACHEL MAGALA

Moses Kanyaitohe last Thursday told *Daily Monitor* that the district Local Government has no powers to call off the quarantine. He said it is the work of the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries.

"We are aware of the public outcry and we are sorry for the varying meat prices. As Namutumba District Local Government, we are also losing local revenue, which we get from selling and slaughtering of animals. We have nothing to do apart from waiting for a final report from the ministry," he said.

He, however, tasked residents and meat sellers to remain calm while the veterinary department strengthens its surveillance and carries out mass vaccination of animals.

KEY ISSUES

Costs. Mr Peter Maganda, a meat seller in Bugobi Trading Centre, Bulange Sub-county attributes the increase of meat price to the scarcity of cattle and high operational costs of transporting them.

Ban still on. The district veterinary officer, Dr Bernard Ngago, said the quarantine is still on until the ministry lifts the ban by giving a report indicating whether the disease has been contained.

Disease. Foot and mouth disease is an infectious and sometimes fatal viral disease that affects cloven-hoofed animals. Susceptible animals include cattle, sheep, goats and pigs. The disease has very severe implications for animal farming, since it is highly infectious and can be spread by infected animals.

The district veterinary officer, Dr Bernard Ngago, said the quarantine is still on until the ministry lifts the ban by giving a report indicating whether the disease has been contained.

"We do not know how long the quarantine is going to last because no examination has been done by the ministry notifying us whether the disease is still rampant or not," he said.

The district chairperson, Mr Saleh Kumbuga, said local revenue collections in the district has dropped since the quarantine was announced.

"As the district chairperson, I am worried about the disease. If it persists, all my expectations to deliver services to the locals will hit a dead rock because there will be no money to implement the budget plans," he said.

Early last month, district veterinary health officials issued a month-long quarantine for all animals following an outbreak of the disease in the sub-counties of Namutumba Rural and Bulange.

Speaking to farmers of Namutumba Rural Sub-county at Ituba Primary School, the district veterinary officer, Dr Bernard Ngago, said the veterinary department would strengthen its surveillance, vaccination and monitoring of the outbreak in the two sub-counties.

Dr Ngago attributed the outbreak of the disease to government's failure to avail the district with vaccines to vaccinate the animals every year. This according to him, has made animals vulnerable to the disease and exposing farmers to losses.

He added that vaccination cam-

Voices

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paings could have prevented the outbreak of the disease.

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What is foot and mouth disease?

Foot and mouth disease is an infectious and sometimes fatal viral disease that affects cloven-hoofed animals. Susceptible animals include cattle, sheep, goats and pigs.

In laboratory experiments, mice,

rats, and chickens have been successfully infected by artificial means, but they are not believed to contract the disease under natural conditions; while humans are very rarely infected.

The disease has very severe implications for animal farming, since it is highly infectious and can be spread by infected animals comparatively easily through contact with contaminated farming equipment, vehicles, clothing, feed and by domestic and wild predators.

Its containment demands considerable efforts in vaccination, strict monitoring, trade restrictions, quarantines and occasionally the culling of animals.

The virus causes a high fever for approximately two to six days, followed by blisters inside the mouth and on the feet that may rupture and cause lameness.

The disease is characterised of high fever that declines rapidly after two or three days, blisters inside the mouth that lead to excessive secretion of stringy or foamy saliva and to drooling, and blisters on the feet that may rupture and cause lameness.

Adult animals may suffer weight loss from which they do not recover for several months, as well as swelling in the testicles of mature males, and in cows, milk production can decline significantly.

Though most animals eventually recover from foot and mouth disease, the disease can lead to inflammation of the heart muscle and death, especially in newborn animals.