

Hippos invade Rakai villages

RAKAI

By Davis Buyondo

Residents of 15 villages in Rakai district are living in fear following the invasion of the area by hippos.

The affected villages are in the sub-counties of Kagamba, Kachera and Dwaniro, which are near Lake Mburo National Park and the lakes of Kijjanebarola and Kacheera.

According to residents, the hippos have injured three people in Kachera and destroyed crops in other villages. The most recent victim was only identified as Pastor Beda.

Kagamba sub-county councillors

Afsa Namiiro and Chris Rujumba said the hippos usually move in groups of two to five, especially at night.

Namiiro said they have destroyed several acres of cassava, maize and sweet potato gardens as well as banana plantations.

"They stray from Lake Kijjanebarola and raid communities. The Uganda Wildlife Authority needs to intervene," Namiiro said.

Ronald Byakatonda, Pamela Tugabirwe and Nabyonga Meeme, who are farmers in Dwaniro, said they each lost at least one acre of potatoes.

"Hippos love sweet potato leaves. Once they know where a garden is, they use all ways to reach there,"



The hippos are said to have come from nearby lakes and the park

Byakatonda said.

Local leaders said the hippo population around the area's water bodies has increased over the last seven years. Julius Byabikyengire, a councillor, said encroachment on the

hippos' habitats by people has also forced the beasts to roam around the villages. He added that the hippo scare in the area has forced farmers into guarding their gardens at night.

Byabikyengire said in the past, authorities had advised residents not to cultivate crops beyond 100 metres from the lake shores.

"When the hippos leave the lake, they immediately start looking for the green vegetation to graze on. The closer people's plantations are to their habitats, the easier it is for the hippos to stray and destroy the crops," he said. Many people have defied authorities to cultivate crops near the lake, he lamented.

Kabale chairpersons

Thu
for
MF

AMU

By

Sho
Am
Am
kill
are
ar
e
fi
7