

Persistent. Tick resistance to acaricides has persisted in the area for seven years now and hundreds of cows have succumbed to the tick-borne disease.

3 TYPES OF TICKS



Boophilus



Rhipicephalus



Amblyoma

Voices



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PRESIDENT MUSEVENI

"We tried the Vectoclor on 91 farms in 91 parishes in the [Kiruhura] district... The drug killed boophilus ticks instantly but for rhipicephalus and amblyoma, it took more rounds of spraying; but it kills all. When you hear people talk about tick resistance in Kiruhura, it is about boophilus tick, the rest have been dying,"

DR GRACE ASIIMWE, DISTRICT VETERINARY OFFICER

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ANKOLE. President Museveni spent about 20 minutes of his nearly one-hour speech during Uganda's 55th Independence anniversary celebrations in Bushenyi District on Monday talking about tick resistance to acaricides.

Cattle keeping is a major source of livelihood for people in Ankole sub-region. Tick resistance to acaricides has persisted in the area for seven years now and hundreds of head of cattle have succumbed to the tick-borne disease.

The three types of ticks afflicting cattle are boophilus, rhipicephalus and amblyoma.

As of September 2016, five groups of acaricides used against ticks were registered on the Ugandan market, according to National Drug Authority (NDA). These include Amidines (11 brands), Synthetic pyrethroids (13 brands), Ivermectins/Macrolactone Lactones (30 brands), Organophosphates (1 brand) and Co-formulations of organophosphates and synthetic pyrethroids (two brands).

Poor use of acaricides

According to the President, the tick resistance is blamed on the concurrent use of these acaricides, said "concerned public servants" allowed unregulated use of these families of acaricides across the whole country.

"Apparently, the correct thing to do should have been to zone the country so that respective families of acaricides are used in different parts for some years, then swapped, as ticks in the respective zones were developing resistance to the respective acaricides. Nobody ever whispered to me this issue," Mr Museveni said.

He added that he used Decatix (of the pyrethroids family) at his farm in Kisozi in Gomba District for 23 years and was only told in 2013 that acaricides are supposed to be swapped after about three to four years.

"By this time, Decatix was no longer killing any ticks on my farm. That's when Dr Imeda Kasheja of NARO [National Agriculture and Research Organisation] told me that I should not have used Decatix continuously for 23 years, and that there were other clans of acaricides," Mr Museveni added.

Tick resistance has mostly been registered in Kiruhura District. According to the district veterinary department, the district has a population of about 490,000 head of cattle and 16 per cent are exotic, mainly Friesian. The district produces between 348,783 and 649,488 litres of milk per day, depending on the season.

The farmers have been using



At risk. A farmer tends to his cows in Kiruhura District recently. Tick resistance has mostly been registered in the district. PHOTO BY ALFRED TUMUSHABE

Drug-resistant ticks suck Ankole cattle farmers' hope

TICK RESISTANCE TO ACARICIDES

Spread. Super resistant ticks that are not responsive to all the molecules of acaricides on the market have been identified on 68 per cent of the farms that reported the problem in western and central Uganda in July 2016 and are believed to be spreading to other areas. This emergence of multiple acaricide resistant ticks and its implication on tick control in Uganda

was also reported in January 2016 by Vudriko et al, 2016.

East and north safe. No complaints have been registered from northern and eastern Uganda as yet, where tick samples collected showed susceptibility to all the molecules of acaricides on the market. This rules out quality issues as had been claimed earlier.

and the poor application.

Boophilus causes babesiosis, which if not detected and treated early enough, the disease causes death of the animal, according to Dr Asiimwe. However, most of the livestock deaths have been caused by east coast fever, which is caused by rhipicephalus tick.

The tick has also been difficult to fight because it does not live on a cow. "It feeds and drops; at the time of spraying, it may have dropped down. It climbs after sometime to feed again," she said.

Fake east coast fever drugs is another challenge to the farmers. Dr Asiimwe said some of the drugs on the market are not effective.

The peak of livestock death was in 2013. However, the incidence has now tremendously reduced.

"The reduction in deaths is as a result of sensitisation and trainings. Farmers were not using crush pens (milking areas), and the moment you are not using crush pens, you are wasting time. We also taught them rotational

grazing; by the time you bring back the cows, the ticks would have starved and died," Dr Asiimwe said.

Vectoclor is now out of stock. However, the ministry is importing more, according to Dr Asiimwe.

"We told farmers to, in the meantime, use amidines - one class, so that when vectoclor comes, they are on the same level," she said.

Farmers Ignorant

Mr Francis Baguma, a farmer in Mbarara District, concurs that many farmers don't spray in the right way, they are not sensitised, and that government is not doing enough in providing veterinary services.

"They (farmers) may not use the right dose in mixing water and acaricides, the application (spraying) is improper and some don't have right spraying structures or crush pens. They use weak spray pumps. For example, when the valve is weak, the acaricide cannot come out of the pump

with the high pressure needed to penetrate hair on the body of the animal where a tick is hidden," he says.

During the independence celebrations, the President pointed out that farmers have their share of blame but was quick to exonerate them.

"One other problem in relation to the acaricide are yourselves, the farmers. Some of the farmers were misusing the acaricides. They did not make proper crush pens, they would make small fenced areas using thorny trees (emitegyero) and just sprinkle (acaricide) on the cattle. That misuse of drugs brings forward a phenomenon of tick resistance to acaricides," Mr Museveni said.

"The local governments and veterinary officers should have enforced the construction of proper crush pens. I don't want to blame you farmers because it is the leaders who don't advise you; the veterinary and sub-county leaders should be the ones to advise you," he said.

Mr Museveni said much as cows have died, they will not get extinct, assuring farmers that solutions are being sought. He said NDA headed by Dr Donna Kusemerwa, and others, say there is Eprinomectin used in form of 'pour on' on cattle that can work against ticks.

"If it is done for two years continuously, it will suppress the ticks. I have called a meeting for all these scientists so that we decide on the way forward for these acaricides," the President said.