

P30 DROUGHT PREPAREDNESS AND INTERVENTION – THE ROLE OF THE VETERINARIAN

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Introduction

Drought is a long period of dry weather when there is not enough water and pastures for livestock to live on. Droughts are a natural phenomenon and are becoming more frequent and more severe with time. They do impact negatively on livestock production and food security. Ultimately human livelihoods, dignity and general health are severely comprised. Their effects are more felt in areas where nomadic pastoralism is the way of life (Arid and Semi-Arid Lands).

Veterinary Intervention

There are two major aims of Veterinary intervention;

- Boost animal body wealth so as to make it go through as many days as possible during deprivation.
- Control disease spread.

This involves building body reserves and immunity. It also involves controlling disease spread by migrating animals. Community involvement in disease control should be encouraged rather than restricting livestock movement.

Others aims include;

- Taking care of incidental conditions/diseases e. g. water poisoning, downer syndrome etc.
- Promote resilient species/breeds through good animal husbandry practices.

These involve providing basic veterinary care and herd/flock improvement services.

Ranking

It is also imperative to understand community ranking of various livestock species, breeds, age groups and sex by importance based on cultural, social, economic and hardiness. This will help determine on how and where to direct the veterinary impetus.

Activities to Carry out

Short term/emergency;

- Endo and ecto parasites control.
- Mineral and vitamins supplementation.
- Vaccinations/ prophylactic treatments.
- Animal Health extensions and trainings.
- Destocking.

Long term;

- Herd improvement services.
- Research and documentation of the interplay between drought and diseases and the various mitigations/coping strategies. This is important for policy formulations.