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Trans-boundary disease control and Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures and standards: Livestock identification to enhance livestock mobility

The practice has enhanced identification, recovery and restitution of stolen animals to the rightful owners, which has contributed to the decline in cattle rustling and preservation of livestock holdings

Introduction

Livestock production is the dominant livelihood activity in Karamoja sub-region which is majorly pastoral and agro-pastoral. As such, protection of livestock holdings is essential for the sustenance and resilience of the communities.

Livestock theft is common in Karamoja. It has resulted in the loss of livestock assets and consequently undermined livelihoods. As a means of authenticating ownership of livestock, livestock identification is common among pastoral communities. Livestock owners brand their animals to ease animal tracking and tracing of ownership when they are recovered. It also eases livestock mobility. However, cattle theft has persisted in Karamoja as marks and brands are often changed when animals are stolen, making recovery difficult

(Mercy Corps, 2011). This has rendered the common branding methods ineffective in curbing livestock theft. Consequently, in 2010, the Office of the Prime Minister (Karamoja Affairs) in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries introduced electronic identification using a combination of Radio Frequency Identification Device, ruminal boluses (inserted permanently in the stomach), and bar code ear tags.

These tamper-proof methods improve identification, recovery and recompense of stolen animals to the rightful owners. The rumen boluses remain in the animal until the end of its life and have no negative health effects. The bolus is only removed from the rumen at slaughter.



INTERVENTION AREA

Market access, trade and financial services



LOCATION

Karamoja sub-region



STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS

Security agencies (Uganda Police, Uganda People's Defence Force)
Cattle traders, market tenderers, District veterinary staff Karamoja
Affairs (OPM) Ministry of Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF)
Local political leaders, opinion leaders and elders to mobilise
livestock owners for sensitisation Non-governmental and
community based organisations working in the livestock sector
Technical personnel to brand the animals



BENEFICIARIES

Livestock owners in the Karamoja sub-region

Constraints

- Branding staff who administer boluses must be well trained because if not well done, it may cause death of livestock, which will discourage livestock owners from bolus identification.
- High cost of devices for identification using boluses.
- Communities still prefer traditional branding so uptake of boluses has been slow.

Sustainability and replicability

Recovered boluses can be bought back from slaughter houses and reused.

Additional information

- Mercy Corps (2011). Uganda Conflict and Market Assessment – Karamoja.
- OPM (2016). Karamoja Integrated Development Plan II (2015/16 – 2020/21). Kampala, Uganda.

Methodological approach

- Community mobilisation and sensitisation on the livestock identification methods.
- Training of technicians on how to insert rumen boluses safely.
- Branding teams visited homesteads and kraals to brand the animals by inserting bolus into rumen of each livestock older than 10 months using bolusing gun. Branded livestock were then marked with ear tags.
- The bolus data was recorded in the herd book. The record book contains the following information: date, name of team leader, owner's location, owner's identification, bar code of the bolus; type, colour, name and sex of animal; signatures of local councillor, owner and witness and the village and parish of the owner.
- The livestock owner was subsequently issued with a certificate for each animal identified and the information captured on cattle and their owners is stored in a database.

Results

- There has been widespread community sensitisation on branding methods and protocol. All stakeholders have been sensitised on their roles.
- By 2014, nearly 88,800 heads of cattle had been electronically branded (OPM, 2016).
- The practice has enhanced identification, recovery and restitution of stolen animals to the rightful owners, which has contributed to the decline in cattle rustling and preservation of livestock holdings.



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