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Improving Livestock Health in South Sudan

Livestock health plays a critical role in the food security and overall well-being of pastoralist communities in South Sudan. When cattle herds are healthy, pastoralists rely heavily on dairy foods to bolster household food stocks with meat and milk, selling any surplus for additional income to care for their families with basic necessities such as health care and clothes. Diseases reduce production of meat and milk, jeopardizing livelihoods for livestock-dependent families and increasing vulnerability to food insecurity and malnutrition.

Keeping cattle healthy is essential for controlling the spread of common livestock diseases, such as contagious bovine pleura pneumonia (CBPP), that threaten cattle herds and render communities throughout South Sudan increasingly vulnerable to food insecurity and malnutrition—especially during the May-to-August lean season, when household food stocks deplete and access to food typically decreases.

With USAID Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) support, non-governmental organization (NGO) Veterinarians sans Frontiers/Germany (VSF/G) is conducting livestock interventions, such as vaccination campaigns and trainings, to improve livestock health, increase food security, and preserve livelihoods in South Sudan.

Through the USAID/OFDA-supported Livestock Emergency Response Program, VSF/G supports community animal health workers to conduct vaccination campaigns in areas with high risk of livestock disease, like Jonglei State's Twic East County. In September 2017, VSF/G teams vaccinated 20,000 livestock throughout Twic East, and isolated and treated more than 1,000 livestock affected by the CBPP outbreak. Additionally, the NGO educated cattle owners on the importance of proper quarantine procedures and safe herding practices as critical ways to prevent the spread of livestock disease. On follow-up visits to the cattle camps, VSF/G learned that the vast majority of treated animals recovered from CBPP, with cattle owners reporting lower disease incidence and reduced death rates among livestock in the weeks following the vaccinations and animal health care trainings.

One woman, Aluel, expressed her gratitude to VSF/G for improving livestock health in her community, noting the positive effects the interventions had on her family. “Milk yields from our cows have improved, producing three liters of milk per cow,” Aluel said. “My children do not go hungry any more. They are healthy now, which makes me a happy mother.”