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PRESS RELEASE

ANTHRAX RULED OUT AS CAUSE OF CATTLE DEATH IN FOYA DISTRICT

(Monrovia, Wednesday, July 19, 2023):- The Ministry of Agriculture’s (MOA) team of animal health technicians in collaboration with the coordinated inter-governmental ONE HEALTH PLATFORM comprising of the Ministry of Health, National Public Health Institute, the Environmental Protection Agency have completed laboratory examinations and analyses of the cause(s) of death of 36 cattle with no indications of infectious diseases – including anthrax and brucellosis.

Both anthrax and brucellosis are infectious diseases transmissible from animals to humans that typically affects cows, sheep, and goats. The symptoms may include fever, joint pain, fatigue, chest pain, cough, shortness of breath, headache, nausea, vomiting, and stomach pains among others.

Thirty-six of sixty-nine cattle – flocked in the same field – were found dead on July 6 in the northwestern Liberian town of Kelima Bendu within the Foyah District, Lofa County near the Guinean and Sierra Leonean borders.

The technicians from the One Health Platform, accompanied by the Joint Security and the Ministry of Internal Affairs moved to the scene to investigate the sudden livestock deaths. The platform, with technical backstopping from the World Bank Regional Disease Surveillance and Enhancement Project, United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO), worked on the examinations and analyses of collected samples.

Blood and tissue samples from the dead and surviving cattle as well as soil samples from the grazing area were collected, examined and analyzed at the MOA’s Central Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory. Water samples from nearby streams were also analyzed.

“All tests conducted on samples collected came **NEGATIVE for** anthrax, brucellosis, showing no traces of pesticide residues; all other water parameters were within permissible levels”, the findings disclosed.

The findings also disclosed: “Even though, all samples tested came out negative, the cattle death is attributed to severe lightning strikes which residents in the town confirmed occurrence the night before the cattle were discovered dead in the morning”.

Lightning strikes is a common cause of mass deaths of cattle in many sub-Saharan countries which animal health practitioners have scientifically proven from several studies.

The Government through the Ministry of Agriculture advises citizens to:

- Avoid contact with sick or dead animals and their products.
- Not slaughter animals at home, rather make use of abattoirs or slaughter slabs.
- Avoid contact with meat/bush meat or animal by-products such as skin, hides (“kpomo”) and milk of a sick or dead animal.
- Report any incidence of sudden death of animals to the nearest veterinary authorities or the Ministry of Agriculture
- Regularly monitor livestock for any sign of sickness or unusual behavior.

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