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CONFIRMATION OF FIRST ANTHRAX CASE IN NIGERIA

The Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development is deeply concerned to announce the confirmation of an anthrax case in Niger State, Nigeria.

On 14th of July, 2023 the Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer of Nigeria was notified of animals manifesting symptoms of suspected case of anthrax in a farm in Suleja, Niger State. The case was in a multi-specie animal farm comprising of cattle, sheep and goats located at Gajiri, along Abuja-Kaduna express way Suleja LGA Niger State, where some of the animals had symptoms including oozing of blood from their body openings - anus, nose, eyes and ears. A Rapid Response team comprising of federal and states One Health Professional Team visited the farm to conduct preliminary investigations and collected samples from the sick animals. Subsequent laboratory tests by the National Veterinary Research Institute laboratory confirmed the diagnosis, marking the first recorded case of anthrax in Nigeria in recent years and after the report of an outbreak of anthrax in Northern Ghana few weeks ago. All animals affected have died.

Anthrax is caused by the spore-forming bacterium *Bacillus anthracis*, which primarily affects animals such as cattle, sheep, and goats but can also infect humans who come into direct contact with infected animals or contaminated animal products, such as meat, wool, or hides. Inhalation anthrax may occur through the inhalation of spores, while cutaneous anthrax can result from contact with contaminated materials or through open wounds.

The Federal Government, through the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in collaboration with the Niger state government has taken proactive measures to ensure the outbreak is controlled and contained quickly in Nigeria. This include;

- Quarantine of the affected farm
- Deployment of anthrax spore vaccines to the affected and adjoining farms to vaccinate in-contact animals
- Educating the farm workers of the affected farms on symptoms, preventive measures and what to do when encounter with suspected case
- Plans are also underway to conduct nationwide vaccination of cattle, sheep and goats against anthrax
- Surveillance of anthrax will be heightened in livestock farms, markets and abattoirs
- Public awareness campaigns on anthrax will be intensified

The Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development hereby encourages all livestock owners to remain vigilant and promptly report any suspicious illness or deaths in their animals and

- To Avoid contact with sick or dead animals and their products.
- To Exercise caution when buying animals - cows, camels, sheep, goats, and other livestock - from Nigerian states bordering Benin, Chad, and Niger, and from Ghana and Togo via waterways.
- Not slaughter animals at home, rather make use of abattoirs or slaughter slabs.
- To avoid contact with meat/bush meat or animal by-products such as skin, hides (“kpomo”) and milk of a sick or dead animal.

- NOT SLAUGHTER sick animals. Slaughtering the sick animal can expose the anthrax spores which can be inhaled by humans if the animal is infected with anthrax.
- NOT EAT products from sick or dead animals.
- Hunters SHOULD NOT pick sick or dead animals from the bush or forest to be sold for human consumption.
- Report any incidence of sudden death of animals to the nearest veterinary authorities or the State Ministry of Agriculture
- Vaccination is the most effective preventive measure against anthrax in livestock. Consult with a veterinarian to develop a vaccination schedule suitable for your specific livestock.
- Use personal protective equipment (gloves, facemasks, goggles, boots) when handling sick animals.
- Regularly monitor livestock for any sign of sickness or unusual behaviour.
- Immediately report cases of animals bleeding from body openings to veterinary authorities, or agriculture extension workers. Note: The blood of an anthrax-infected animal DOES NOT CLOT.
- DO NOT PROCESS or MOVE THE DEAD or SICK ANIMAL, QUICKLY REPORT to your VETERINARY DOCTOR or VETERINARY AUTHORITIES at the Ministry of Agriculture in your state.
- Maintain good hygiene practices on the farm through regular cleaning and disinfection of animal housing, feeding equipment, and water troughs.
- Practice biosecurity measures, such as controlling access to the farm, restricting movement of animals, and disinfecting vehicles and equipment entering and leaving the premises.
- Ensure a clean and safe water supply for livestock and avoid using water from stagnant sources.

- Sick animals should be isolated and strict quarantine measures implemented to prevent the spread of anthrax to other animals or humans. Early detection and reporting of suspected anthrax cases in animals or humans is important for implementing effective control measures.

Once again, I assure you that all necessary steps will be taken to contain the disease and the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development through the Department of Veterinary and Pest Control Services will continue to provide updates on the situation of the disease

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