



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

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**STATE DEPARTMENT OF LIVESTOCK**  
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The Director of Veterinary Services

Date: 19<sup>th</sup> March 2020

All County Directors of Veterinary Services

**RE: COVID-19 AND VETERINARY SERVICES**

The first case of Coronavirus disease, COVID-19, was confirmed in Kenya on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2020. Since then, the COVID-19 National Emergency Response Committee, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Cooperatives and various county governments have issued guidelines on public and individual behavior to manage the disease.

We all recognize that veterinary services are essential to ensure a continuum in food safety, disease prevention and animal emergency management. Consequently, the following measures which are in line with the communique of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and the World Veterinary Association (WVA) on “**COVID-19 and veterinary activities designated as essential**” are issued.

**Disease surveillance:** it is of paramount importance to carry out active and passive animal disease surveillance within your respective county so as to quickly detect any notifiable diseases which may arise. This is because, such diseases often engender huge losses which can only worsen the economic situation in livestock value chains. Moreover, some of these diseases are zoonotic and can further complicate the prevailing delicate public health status in the country.

It is therefore advised that whenever a notifiable disease is suspected, immediately impose a provisional quarantine as you take samples for diagnosis. If an outbreak is confirmed, maintain the quarantine and carry out a ring vaccination in the affected areas. It is therefore necessary that you

procure and keep stocks of vaccines against diseases that commonly occur in your locality. For various counties, these include Foot and Mouth Disease; Anthrax; Rift Valley Fever (rains are expected); Lumpy Skin Disease; Sheep and Goat Pox; Contagious Caprine Pleuropneumonia; Camel Pox; Blue Tongue; Peste des Petit Ruminants and New Castle Disease. Counties in the North-Eastern Region should be on the lookout for the camel associated Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-COV).

When vaccinating animals in large groups, it is advised that you wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) including a face mask and gloves since you will be meeting many livestock producers from diverse locations. Where possible, inform livestock producers to present animals individually at vaccination sites.

**Prioritize animal movement control** as a key intervention in animal disease control. It is cheaper and often very effective. As much as possible, examine animals before issuing movement permits. Remember to issue permits for animals migrating in search of pasture and water.

**Animal markets and other gatherings:** it is notable that some counties have closed all markets including animal markets. This is commendable as such markets act as foci of disease exchange among animals. Where markets are still operating, conduct disease surveillance on various animal species presented for sale.

Other gatherings of animals include agricultural shows, trade fairs and dips. Whereas shows and trade fairs are now banned, dipping of animals has to continue as a key disease control measure. Carry out disease surveillance at dip sites and advise animal owners as appropriate. If possible, consider offering preventive vaccination at the dips.

**Slaughterhouses:** these facilities will continue to operate as scheduled but be sure to reduce unnecessary crowding around and within the slaughterhouses. Only meat inspectors, flayers and a few people to clean green offal should be in the slaughterhouse. Outside the slaughterhouse, have the meat transporters only. They should however stay in their vehicles and wait to be summoned to load meat and quickly vacate the slaughterhouse premises. All hangers-on including people selling tea, ropes and paper bags that usually throng slaughterhouses must be kept away. Request for police assistance where necessary.

**Meat markets** include Burma in Nairobi, butcheries and open food markets such as Wakulima in Nairobi and similar markets across the country. The open food markets are also referred to as “wet markets”. All these forms of markets shall under no circumstances harbor any live animals like chickens, ducks, rabbits, cats and dogs. It is worth noting that the COVID-19 Pandemic arose at a wet market where meat was displayed for sale in close proximity to live animals. It is suspected that the virus made “a species jump” from the live animals at the market to humans through meat which was handled by people who touched their faces and transferred the virus to their respiratory systems through their nostrils or mouths and contracted the disease. The virus then quickly mutated

in humans and has been able to move from person to person through air-borne droplets or coming into contact with virus-contaminated surfaces.

It is necessary to observe that meat inspection takes place in markets like Burma and many open food markets where poultry and rabbits are slaughtered. Responsible meat inspectors should be instructed to observe the contents of this Circular. In all other meat markets where veterinary personnel are not directly involved in sanitary matters, please liaise with your colleagues in the Department of Public Health to implement these measures.

**Audit of farms:** try and visit most animal farms in your county and stress to the owners the need to maintain separate sleeping quarters from places where animals are kept at night. It has been observed that in some counties, people sleep in the same rooms with animals like sheep, goats, calves, chickens, piglets and even adult cows. Animals are known sources of coronavirus that they can secrete from their nostrils or in their faeces. The latter can contaminate human food of any kind and even water and precipitate human infections. Coronaviruses are first evolving. Mutations of animal variants which can potentially infect humans are on-going so keeping a reasonable distance from animals is necessary at all times.

Finally, whenever in doubt as to how to proceed in managing an animal disease situation or a food safety measure during this time of partial lockdown to contain COVID-19, call the Director of Veterinary Services immediately.

Observe these guidelines alongside those issued by the COVID-19 National Emergency Response Committee, Ministry of Health and your county leadership consistently. Further guidelines on veterinary services may be issued by my office in future depending on the progression of the COVID-19 Pandemic.



**Dr. Obadiah N. Njagi, PhD, OGW**  
Director of Veterinary Services

Copy:

Principal Secretary – State Department of Livestock  
Chairman CoG – Agriculture Committee  
Chairman – CECM Agriculture  
Vice Chairman – Joint Committee for Veterinary Services