

Veterinary Support: Process Case Study

Carcass disposal in Mongolia

Mongolia is prone to severe winter weather as well as to drought in summer. When lack of summer rain prevents pasture growth, livestock enter the winter in poor body condition. Blizzard conditions, ice over pasture, and very low temperatures – as low as -50°C – result in a winter emergency known as *dzud*. Horses, cattle, sheep, cashmere goats, camels, and yaks starve and freeze to death.

Dzud occurred over two consecutive winters between 1999 and 2002, and again between 2009 and 2010, leading to large-scale livestock mortality. In the 1999–2002 period, 11.2 million animals died out of around 30 million nationally according to government reports. In rural areas, a large proportion of the population were nomadic herders, and livestock mortality on this scale resulted in a great loss of livelihoods. National and international agencies responded by providing animal feed and veterinary support.

In 2010, a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) intervention assisted in the removal of around 2.7 million animal carcasses from three *aimags* (provinces), which amounted to 20 per cent of the total *dzud*-affected territory. Individual cash-for-work (CFW) transfers to 18,605 participants and reimbursements of fuel costs, totalling \$121,600, were disbursed with the assistance of a local bank that did not charge bank fees or make service charges. The CFW scheme also addressed social equity and gender equality through inclusive collective action, and helped those worst affected with overcoming the psychological trauma that they had suffered. International development agencies such as the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and Mercy Corps began replicating the CFW initiative in other *aimags* in conjunction with the Government of Mongolia. The UNDP intervention complemented the Mongolian Government's carcass removal programme in the remaining *aimags*.

Sources:

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