

Limitations of livestock vaccination during emergencies

Livestock vaccination has been an institutionalised response to drought in pastoralist areas of Ethiopia for many years, with millions of doses of vaccine delivered through NGOs and government. An impact assessment of this approach aimed to measure its impact on livestock asset protection, and thus compare mortality by disease between vaccinated and non-vaccinated herds in drought years in three regions of the country. For herds of cattle, camels, and small ruminants, the results showed no significant difference in mortality in vaccinated and non-vaccinated animals from those diseases covered by vaccination programmes during drought. The lack of impact from vaccination was explained by reference to a range of technical issues, but the overall conclusion was that vaccination of livestock should take place during normal, non-crisis periods.

These findings led to emergency coordination bodies and donors in Ethiopia revising their support to veterinary care during drought, and placing more emphasis on veterinary voucher schemes with the private sector. More widely, the assessment showed the importance of understanding the livelihoods impact of livestock vaccination during emergencies, and the risk of assuming that vaccination automatically protects livestock assets and that it is a cost-effective approach in emergencies.

Source: Catley, A. and Blakeway, S. (2004) 'Donkeys and the provision of livestock to returnees: lessons from Eritrea', in P. Starkey and D. Fielding (eds), *Donkeys, People and Development: A Resource Book of the Animal Traction Network for Eastern and Southern Africa (ATNESA)*, pp. 86–92, Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation, Wageningen, The Netherlands, <http://www.atnesa.org/donkeys/donkeys-catley-returnees-ER.pdf>