

Waste suspected of killing over 30 cows in Warrap State

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August 13, 2012 (JUBA) - At least 32 cows have died in Tonj South County of Warrap State, a week after reports alleging that medical waste had been dumped in the area. Officials are not yet linking the two incidents but locals farmers demand that the government intervene.

The animal auxiliary officer for the area, John Jok, told *Sudan Tribune* that the matter was reported to his office, prompting him to visit the dumping site. He explained that a clinical examination of the seven cattle that were brought to him for testing revealed a large presence of parasites on the animals' skin.

Jok said his examinations provided no evidence that the cattle deaths were related to the expired drugs, saying "it needs proper examination and we don't have those medical equipment to do so."

One of the seven cattle Jok examined had a large number of plastic bags in its stomach, he said. Despite not linking the deaths, he condemned the indiscriminate dumping of chemical waste and decried the lack of equipment available to him.

Jok denied that the waste had come from a veterinary assessment team who had visited the area and not properly disposed of their vaccines, cartons and used syringes.

Farmers have told *Sudan Tribune* that two sections of farmland had toxic waste dumped on it by unknown individuals.

Madut Deng, a farmer from Tonj South County, said he deplored the dumping of the toxic materials, which he believed had caused the death of his cattle, describing the act as "criminal behaviour".

He said the situation was a product of "gross negligence" on the part of the medical community saying they should have known better that the animals' lives and health were at risk at the time of the disposal.

"Seven among the 32 cattle were taken to the principal veterinary officer in Tonj for examination. But after going through the examination, they realised that some of the cattle had swallowed plastic bags, among other things that might have caused their death," he asserted.

Deng urged the government intervene so as to bring to book those responsible of dumping the expired drugs, adding that the action was "unethical and unacceptable."

The farmer stressed that they spent a colossal sum of money to treat the remaining animals; an intervention he said ended up to be a fruitless exercise as the animals could not survive it.

When contacted to shed light on the alleged involvement of health personnel waster dumping, the local administrative officer, Madhel Deng dismissed the allegations against the veterinary personnel, saying "the welfare of the people and animals are our top concern."

He said they have no idea about those who dumped the toxic materials at the site, stressing that people should know that it is not only health personnel that deal with drugs.

"What I know is that those drugs were not from the members of the Animal Health Team that came from Kuacjok to conduct an assessment recently because whenever we are embarking on our incineration exercise, we inform all the stakeholders".

Deng said that they are currently working with development officers in the area to identify a proper dumping site for the community, with a view to curb the indiscriminate dumping in the town.

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