

Dissemination and Planning Workshop for Transmission Dynamics of African Swine Fever in Masaka

A one day meeting was held at Palm Springs Hotel in Masaka District on the 10th September 2015. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss updates on African Swine Fever (ASF) and pig genetics research in Uganda. The meeting was also an opportunity to select areas in order to advance research towards control of ASF. The inception meeting brought together District Veterinary Officers from Masaka, Lyantonde, Rakai, Kalungu, Bukomansimbi, Ssembabule and Lwengo districts. The aforementioned districts are proposed study areas in the project design. Farmers will be selected from the districts for the project studies. Also in attendance were Project and College of Natural Sciences (CoNAS) staff.

The District Veterinary Officer for Masaka, Mr. Lawrence Mayega gave opening remarks as the representative of the host district. He reiterated the importances of meetings like this one, that there is opportunity for information sharing and keeping updated with new trends. He thanked the project leader for considering greater Masaka as one of the study areas. He noted that greater Masaka is a major pig rearing enclave in Uganda and there is interface of domestic and wild pigs. Dr. Mayega said, he is hopeful that this project will provide critical answers in the control and treatment of ASF.

The Principal Investigator of the Project, Assoc. Prof. Charles Maseembe took the meeting through the work that had done for ASF over the years. He said, 'We have been working on ASF for a long time but we have got Wellcome trust support to do more in-depth work in this research and possibly get a solution'. He explained the history of the disease which was first discovered in Kenya in 1921. He noted that if ASF is not controlled and possibly a vaccine not discovered, the pork industry is in danger. Uganda is 3rd Pig rearing country in Africa and an important income generating industry of many households. He further noted that, 'Interface between ticks/bush pigs/warhogs/domestic pigs is not clear at present; there may be no direct interaction between all these because no information is available. But we ask ourselves what are the dynamics? Possibly, after 5 years which is the duration of this research project we could be able to explain the dynamics. Our hope is to provide information to farmers, Ministry of Agriculture Animal Industry and Fisheries and other researchers.

Group work was undertaken where districts were divided into two groups i.e. Katonga Region (Kalungu, Bukomansimbi, Lyantonde, Ssembabule) and Victoria Crescent (Rakai, Masaka, Lwengo). This was useful for the workshop participants to better understand the landscape of pig farming in their areas and also understand the various stakeholders. The information from the discussions would be useful in informing their work and the project as well.

The above mentioned project is funded by the Wellcome Trust, UK for which Dr. Charles Maseembe (Assoc. Professor in the College of National Sciences) as a

Principal Investigator together with scientists at the Centre for Virus Research, University of Glasgow in United Kingdom, won the prestigious Intermediate Fellowship in Public Health and Tropical Medicine.