

Is there a link between socio-cultural practices and vulnerability to Rift Valley Fever (RVF) in Baringo County, Kenya?

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- RVF was reported in Baringo County, Kenya, for the 1st time in 2006-2007.
- Past RVF research is limited to entomological, epidemiological, economical and climatological dimensions.
- RVF is rarely studied from a socio-cultural dimension.
- Communities are critical determinants of their own health outcomes through influencing animal and human RVF-induced morbidity and mortality.
- In an ongoing cross-sectional study on community adaptation to malaria and RVF in Baringo county, data exploring the link between socio-cultural practices and vulnerability to RVF were collected through 16 focus group discussions - 8 men only and 8 women only - and 10 key informant interviews - 5 men only and 5 women only.
- The following narrative captures the preliminary results:



I heard you say Rift Valley fever, did you mean Yellow fever?

No, I think it's a disease caused by bad wind. I heard that in the lowlands it killed people, particularly herders, and cattle in 2006-2007.

Couldn't they treat their cattle? When our animals are sick we treat them with plant materials as we wait for the medicines or doctors to come.

Its so sad that their animals died! When an animal dies from unknown reasons or from disease, we test its meat for suitability of consumption with our indigenous knowledge and it works!

It is a taboo to bury or burn dead livestock. We must cut open the abdomen or cut the animal into pieces.

And those people, did they not seek any treatment? You know, when I suspect I am suffering from a febrile illness I take my traditionally made medicine or remnant medication as I monitor how the disease will progress.



End

Did I tell you, the last time I went to graze my cattle one of my cows had challenges in delivering? I quickly washed my hands and ran to assist it.

Don't worry. After all, when we take our livestock away from home for grazing, sometimes even for months, we don't carry bed nets.

Speaking of febrile illnesses, my wife did not get a bed net from the health facility. They are not in stock.

Conclusion: Socio-cultural practices influence vulnerability to animal and human RVF infections.

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