



MINISTRY OF HEALTH

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT ON THE OUTBREAK OF
ANTHRAX IN CHAMA**

Presented to the National Assembly

by

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Hon. Minister of Health

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Pre-amble

Mr. Speaker, thank you for granting me this opportunity to present a Ministerial Statement on the outbreak of Anthrax in Chama District of Muchinga Province and to indicate the measures that Government has taken to stop the spread of the disease.

Background

Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform the House that there is an on-going outbreak of Anthrax in Chama District of Muchinga Province. The first case was reported on the 22nd of September 2016, and there are currently twenty-two (22) cases and no associated human deaths.

Mr. Speaker, Anthrax is a disease that affects animals and can be transmitted to humans. It is caused by a bacterium, called ***Bacillus Anthracis***, which can last for extremely long periods in nature. When animals or humans come into contact with this bacteria, they can become infected. There are three (3) forms of Anthrax in humans:

1. **Cutaneous or the “Skin” form of Anthrax.** This appears as sores on the skin in the parts of the body that have come into contact with the Anthrax Bacteria;
2. **Inhalation or Pulmonary Anthrax.** In this form, the person breathes in the Anthrax Bacteria and the lungs get affected. The person develops a cough and has difficulty breathing and may die if not treated in time;
3. **Gastro-intestinal Anthrax.** In this form, the Anthrax Bacteria are swallowed and the patient develops bloody diarrhea. The person could possibly die from this form if not treated in time.

Mr. Speaker, since the first case was reported investigations have been carried out by my Ministry working in conjunction with other Government Departments and Agencies and it has been established

that, the source of the current outbreak, in Chama, is people handling, cutting, cooking and eating meat from Hippos that have died of Anthrax in the Luangwa river.

Mr. Speaker in the current Anthrax outbreak in Chama, only the cutaneous or “skin form” of Anthrax has been reported. It has been observed that, all the people infected so far have handled either the carcasses of the Hippos that have died of anthrax, or handled or eaten meat ~~gotten~~ ^{obtained} from such carcasses.

Mr. Speaker, I would like through you to take this opportunity to discourage anyone who may be tempted to handle or eat meat from the carcass of an infected Hippo or indeed any other animal that may have died from unknown causes as this could be a source of infection which could lead to severe illness and even death.

Further, I would like to urge anyone who may have handled, or indeed eaten meat from a Hippo that may have died of Anthrax in Chama district and the surrounding areas to urgently report to the nearest health facility for examination.

Measures taken

Mr. Speaker, since the index case was seen on 22nd September 2016, the following measures have been taken.

- An emergency Infectious Disease task force was ~~held~~ ^{Constituted} at Ministry of Health;
- A multi-sectoral team including Veterinary Officers and the UNZA School of Veterinary Medicine are ~~due~~ ^{about} to travel to Chama to help with the response;
- A mobile Bio-safety level 3 laboratory will be deployed for quick confirmation of cases both in human and Hippo populations;
- Sufficient medicines are available to treat those infected and they are being treated;
- Community sensitization has continued through radio Kwenje;

- All Health facilities in Chama South have been put on high alert. These include Mapampa, Chifunda, Chikwa, Chigoma, Pondo and Fuluza;
- The Health team has engaged ZAWA officers in patrolling the infamous place known as “Baghdad” to stop people handling dead hippo meat.

Conclusion

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion I want to reiterate that people in the areas of outbreak of Anthrax should at all times desist from handling or eating infected dead hippo meat as this is the source of infection of Anthrax in the area.

Secondly, those that may have already come into contact with dead hippos should present themselves to the nearest health facilities for medical examination.

Finally I would like to assure the Nation that there is no need for panic as the Government has sufficient capacity to respond to such outbreaks and the situation is under control.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.