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News

£2m bid to tackle African cattle disease

African farmers will benefit from a £2 million grant awarded to the University to help combat poverty in Africa.

Researchers from the Centre for Infectious Diseases are to work with Kenyan and Nigerian scientists to find new ways of tackling cattle disease, which can impact farmers' livelihoods as well as human health.

The project will target two infections of domestic livestock - East Coast Fever and trypanosomiasis.

The team hopes to develop vaccines and implement prevention programmes by working directly with local communities.

International development

Livestock diseases are a real barrier to development in Africa where decreased productivity can cause significant economic losses.

East Coast Fever alone is estimated to cost in excess of 300 million US dollars each year.

Trypanosomiasis is a double hitter - not only do infected cows become ill, but if a tsetse fly bites an infected cow, the fly can then pass the disease to humans to cause potentially fatal sleeping sickness.

These awards give scientists in Edinburgh an exciting opportunity to use their expertise to directly benefit poor farmers in sub-Saharan Africa. We hope the research will have a tangible impact upon the economy of the communities involved.

Professor Tony Nash

Director of the Centre for Infectious Diseases

Research aims

The grant will facilitate two research teams.

The first will focus on improving vaccinations for East Coast Fever.

A team from the University's Roslin Institute will work with partners from the University of Glasgow and the International Livestock Research Institute in Nairobi to investigate how livestock normally respond to infection by different strains of the disease.

The second project will focus on Trypanosomiasis for which there are few new vaccination leads.

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Currently the best treatment method is a single dose of an anti-parasitic drug which can clear the animal of infection and prevent re-infection.

The University will be working with Nigerian partners to establish the best ways in which African communities can use these techniques to protect their cattle and their livelihoods.

The scheme - Combating Infectious Diseases in Livestock for International Development - has been developed out of a partnership between the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council and the UK Department for International Development.

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