

Lay beliefs and practices of pastoralists in rural Tanzania: Their effects on human brucellosis control

Caroline Mwihaki Mburu¹, Salome Bukachi, Khamati Shilabukha, Ezekiel Mangi², and Kathrin Heitz Tokpa³

¹University of Nairobi, Kenya

²Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences, Tanzania

³Centre Suisse de Recherches Scientifiques en Cote d'Ivoire, Cote d'Ivoire

Brucellosis which is a highly contagious zoonotic disease is endemic in many countries in Africa. In Tanzania, this disease is a major problem especially in pastoral systems because of consumption practices, low awareness, and difficulty in implementing livestock control measures. The control and prevention of brucellosis partly

depend on a holistic approach to understanding the interaction of factors such as lay perceptions and practices of the local communities especially those related to animal husbandry practices. The purpose of this study was to describe the lay beliefs and practices that impact on the transmission of brucellosis among pastoralists in the Morogoro region of Tanzania. An ethnographic study was utilized through participant observation, focus group discussions, in-depth narratives of personal lived experiences and observations. The socio-ecological model was used to provide a better understanding of the context within which brucellosis occurs by analyzing people within their social, cultural and physical settings across various levels. This multi-level analysis was beneficial since it will help to develop mitigation

measures that are specific to various levels of influence and that are more contextually specific. This study suggested that while participants were aware of the risks of acquiring brucellosis related to their livestock-related practices, their experiences did not warrant any need to change their habits. This is especially because brucellosis is often misdiagnosed and thus to the locals it does not seem to be a major problem. This study provides detailed knowledge of the communities' awareness and risk perception related to human brucellosis. The understanding of these dynamics is helpful in contributing to the development of suitable health communication and mitigation strategies that are contextually specific and more likely to be adopted by the local communities.

mwihakicarol@gmail.com