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“Exploring opportunities ...
for managing natural resources and a better life for all”

Rangeland rehabilitation as a tool for livestock management and disease prevention in Eastern Africa

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Abstract

Vétérinaires Sans Frontières Germany (VSFG) is a non-governmental organisation dedicated to improving animal health, food security, and the livelihoods of pastoralist communities in various regions in East Africa. Recognizing the intricate interplay between animal, human and environmental health, VSF Germany employs a holistic approach to address the multifaceted challenges faced by these communities.

The rehabilitation of rangelands in East Africa is crucial for the conservation of ecosystems and thus for the preservation of biodiversity and the safeguarding of local livelihoods. In that case, the link between livelihood sustainability, food security and animal health is complex as well as of central importance. The rangelands in this region face multiple challenges: overgrazing, deforestation, soil erosion, invasive species and the negative effects of climate change, especially droughts and desertification.

Diseases such as Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR) pose a significant threat to food security through loss of production of meat and milk products, as the mortality of infected animals is high. It can therefore lead to migration, poverty, malnutrition, social insecurity and even conflicts that might escalate into wars. The FAO emphasises the urgency of eradicating PPR by 2030 and calls for an increase in funding to curb its spread. Similarly, anthrax, which is exacerbated by drought, poses a threat to both ruminants and humans. The transmission of *Bacillus anthracis* spores to livestock via the ingestion of contaminated grass due to contaminated soil means that the disease can be transmitted to humans via raw dairy products and meat.

To address these challenges, a holistic, interdisciplinary and multi-sectoral One Health approach that combines rangeland rehabilitation and sustainable livestock management with diversified agricultural practices and fisheries development are essential for resilient and thriving communities in East Africa. VSFG is already implementing this as part of projects with local communities in countries such as Sudan and Ethiopia, which are particularly affected by the consequences of climate change and armed conflicts, and thereby improves the lives for both animals and humans.

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