



## MVA Newsletter

### 21 April 2023

The recent MVA annual general meeting has injected a flurry of activity into the organisation. With apologies for the long gap since the last newsletter, the MVA Executive is pleased to dedicate this issue of the newsletter to the response to the recent devastating floods in the south.

**In this issue: Cyclone Freddy - Field Clinics to Assist Livestock in Disaster Areas**  
**Compiled by Dr Dagmar Mayer and Dr Laston Chimaliro**



## Cyclone Freddy Response

### Background

On March 13<sup>th</sup>, "Very Intense Tropical Cyclone Freddy" swept through Southern Malawi. The cyclone was exceptionally long-lived and the longest-lasting cyclone ever recorded worldwide. Malawi was the hardest-hit country and the heavy rains caused catastrophic flash floods and mudslides.



Site of a khola in Chikwawa district, where all 32 goats of this farmer were washed away

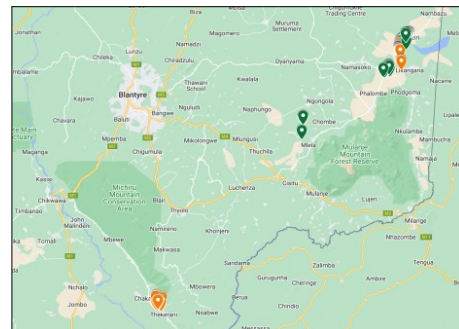
More than 600 people were confirmed dead after houses and entire villages were washed away, and subsequently more than 500 missing people have been declared dead. More than 650,000 people have been displaced by the cyclone and are living in 740 camps, many of which are schools. Roads and at least 40 bridges were destroyed, with many areas still not accessible by vehicle.

There is a high risk of infectious disease transmission due to overcrowding at the camps; due to the flooding and loss of infrastructure, water borne and vector borne diseases are of particular concern.



Flooded fields in Phalombe district

Worldwide Veterinary Service (WVS) sent out the first team of veterinarians and veterinary nurses to Chikwawa on April 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, where they treated 363 goats, 78 cows, and 53 dogs for internal and external parasites.



Map showing the areas visited by the emergency response team from April 4 to 14

After discussions between WVS, the Malawi Veterinary Association (MVA), and the director of the DAHLD, vet volunteers were recruited from within the department and the Malawi veterinary profession.



Dr John Kothowa administering dewormers to a cattle in Mulanje

The intervention was planned together with DAHLD Officers of Mulanje and Phalombe districts, and the Assistant Vet Officers and Animal Health Surveillance Assistants of the relevant EPAs worked alongside the veterinary team. Between April 11<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, the team treated cattle and other livestock with essential anti-parasitic therapies.



Bridget Mnyalira (5th year vet student) treating cattle with internal and external anti-parasitic treatment

This initiative was made possible by prompt and efficient discussion between relevant stakeholders. WVS released funds for the disaster response program and donated essential drugs

(albendazole, deltamethrin, ivermectin, injectable antibiotics, topical wound treatments, canine anti-parasitics, fipronil, and other veterinary supplies).

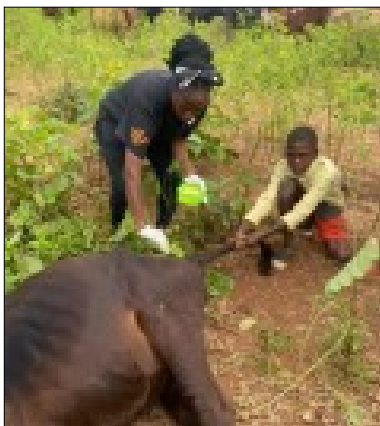


Assistant vet officers in Mulanje with Dr Joe Magombo, Dr John Kothowa and Bridget Mnyalira



AVOs in Phalombe applying pour-on, and administering dewormers

The BSPCA provided free accommodation at their volunteer housing in Blantyre. The MVA spread the word about this campaign, recruited veterinary volunteers, contributed to lunch allowances, and led discussions with the DAHLD who provided a vehicle, driver, and fuel for the program.



Vet volunteers treating a cow injured during Cyclone Freddy

All data was entered in the WVS data collection app: numbers of animals before the cyclone and now, treatments administered for each animal, including the GPS location of all entries.

The response team found that the majority of cattle were in poor condition with low body condition scores. Many were suffering from wounds on their legs after standing in water for prolonged periods. Given the observed physical symptoms, the cattle were likely suffering from high worm burdens. There was also a high prevalence of lumpy skin disease (spread by biting flies) and *Dermatophilus congolensis* in Phalombe district especially.

Of the 390 farmers visited, it was determined that these farmers had 2,498 animals before the cyclone but only 1,971 after. These farmers lost

163 goats (678 before and 515 after the cyclone), 330 cows (1,636 before and 1,306 after), and 34 dogs. The goats and dogs were washed away during the floods, while the cattle mostly died over the following weeks. Farmers were dispersed during the cyclone and returned the following week to find the cattle showing signs of illness such as weight loss, shivering, anorexia, collapse, and eventually death.



AVOs and AHSAs in Phalombe with the response team

### Challenges faced during the project

1. Poor accessibility of other locations and the team had to walk on foot and cross rivers to reach out to injured livestock which could not come to a focal point of treatment.
2. High demand for drugs caused the team to run out of drugs in the Phalombe area and we had to revisit the area on another day.

On challenge 1, it would be ideal to visit areas which are hard to reach when the areas are a bit dry to assist livestock in those areas.

### Conclusion and recommendations

Cyclone Freddy had a huge effect on the economic welfare and animal welfare. Economically the farmers acknowledge that they may not afford veterinary services due to the cyclone as such the project provided much needed service which may ensure survival of their livestock and help national economic recovery in a long run. The intervention program received positive feedback from the farmers and districts animal health and livestock development offices.

We only managed to visit 3 districts out of the 10 affected districts in the southern region, this indicates that there is a huge need to continue lobbying for more well wishers to continue with the project in all affected areas. The team also



recommends introduction of other intervention programs such as livestock pass on projects to assist on economic recovery of the farmers, construction of disaster resilient livestock housing in the affected districts and to the affected farmers

and administration of vaccines, training of veterinarians and para-veterinarians on disaster mitigation, preparedness and response in relation to animal welfare.

**Summary of livestock owned before and after Cyclone Freddy and treatments administered**

	<b>Goats</b>		<b>Albendazole / Worming</b>	<b>Tick pour on</b>	<b>Ivermectin</b>	<b>Antibiotic treatment</b>
	Before	678				
	After	515	646	387		1
	<b>Cows</b>					
	Before	1636				
	After	1306	1082	1150	22	46
	<b>Dogs</b>					
	Before	184				
	After	150	120	132	8	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>Before</b>	<b>2498</b>				
	<b>After</b>	<b>1971</b>	<b>1848</b>	<b>1669</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>51</b>

**Guidelines for Contributors:**

MVA Financial Members are invited to contribute articles or letters for publication in the newsletter. Articles should be brief, typically not more than 500 words, and preferably be accompanied by photographs or other illustrations. The MVA Newsletter is a forum for news rather than a scientific publication. It is not intended for circulation of academic advances. Articles of a commercial nature or otherwise irrelevant, will not be accepted.

To submit material for publication, please email the MVA Secretary at [mva.malawi@gmail.com](mailto:mva.malawi@gmail.com).