

Estimated reading time: 7 minute(s)

Introduction

Thomson et al. (2013) illustrated that transboundary animal diseases such as *anthrax* and *foot and mouth disease* are significant obstacles in both livestock production and trade. Hence, the need to address the issue of these trans-boundary diseases.

Namibia is one of the countries in Southern Africa that exports buffalo meat to the European markets. The African buffalo is a known reservoir of foot and mouth disease (Vosloo and Thomson, 2017). Foot and mouth disease virus is reported to be tenacious in a buffalo for up-to five years and dominant in a herd for at-least two decades (Condy et al., 1985).

Our topic today is based on one of the members of the “Big Five” which includes: *the lion, leopard, rhinoceros, elephant* and the *Syncerus caffer* commonly known as **the Southern Savannah buffalo.**

Why is the Southern Savannah buffalo classified under the “Big Five?”

This is because the “Big Five” animals are said to be difficult and dangerous in nature particularly during trophy hunting a sport.

Southern Savannah buffalo a reservoir for

foot and mouth disease virus (FMDV)

Buffaloes are well known biological indicators for FMDV as they are the major reservoir of the disease. They possess a serious challenge to farmers situated near game reserves with buffaloes or when sharing grazing land with domesticated livestock such as cattle.

Furthermore, buffaloes are a greatest concern in trade, as **venison undergoes a series of tests prior to export to European markets.** Hence, **more costs are incurred by wildlife farmers** in order to penetrate the export market.

Given that a herd of buffaloes can harbor the FMDV for up-to two decades, which makes it impossible to completely eradicate it from the entire herd. Adjacently, cattle herds are adversely affected in-turn as often times they share grazing with buffaloes in the wild.

Tourism is also affected

The Southern Savannah buffalo is an iconic symbol in the tourism industry, which attracts a lot of tourists from all over the world. Especially, the FMD and tuberculosis free buffaloes found in the Tsumkwe and Waterberg area.

What is the mode of transmission of the foot-and-mouth disease virus?

- Vehicle tires
- Fecal and urine samples
- Saliva
- Inhalation or ingestion of infected material

Highly susceptible livestock

- Cattle
- Pigs

What must be done to suppress the foot-and-mouth disease virus?

- Can be achieved through collective effort by neighboring countries such as Botswana, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe, through **fencing of reserves in order to minimize contact** between game species and [domesticated livestock](#)
- **Vaccination of livestock** throughout the year
- **Educating the local people** on these trans-boundary diseases

Fun facts. Did you know that?

- If a buffalo is under attack, the herd rushes to the victim's defense.
- The gestation period of a cow (female buffalo) is 11 months.
- An adult buffalo's horns are a unique feature; they have attached bases which forms a continuous bone shield known as a "boss".

Conclusion

In summary, **the Southern Savannah buffalo is a known bio-indicator in the wildlife sector**. Therefore, awareness creation ought to be made to enlighten farmers situated near game reserves in order to suppress the spread of the FMDV.

References

<http://justfunfacts.com/interesting-facts-about-african-buffalo/>

Buffaloes: bio-indicators of the foot-and-mouth disease
virus

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Condy, J. B., Hedger, R. S., Hamblin, C., & Barnett, I. T. R. (1985). The duration of the foot-and-mouth disease virus carrier state in African buffalo (i) in the individual animal and (ii) in a free-living herd. *Comparative immunology, microbiology and infectious diseases*, 8(3-4), 259-265.

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