Lowland grazing and Murbag Virus Disease (MVD) outbreak in Kween district, Uganda.

Kween district, Uganda recently experienced Murbag Virus Disease (MVD) outbreak with case fatality rate of 100%. Although hunting for wild meat was linked to the MVD outbreak in Kween district, less was reported on the land use change, especially changing animal grazing practices in Kween district. However, understanding grazing patterns in Kween district in relation to a phenomenon is very significant for the design of effective communication and mitigation strategies as well as coping and adaptation strategies. This paper used focus group discussions (FGDs) and observations to fill this knowledge lacuna. Results show that although a few elderly participants ascribed fatal causes (disobedience to gods, ancestors, and evil spirits) to the MVD outbreak during FGDs, majority of participants rightly linked MVD to settling in caves (inhabited by Fruit Bats) during wet season as upper belts are extensively used for crop production leaving little space for animal grazing. Members also noted side activities like hunting for wild meat during this grazing period that could have predisposed them to Murbag Virus. Finally, observations showed use of caves for human settlement and nourishing of goats with mineral salts through mineral collection and deliberate animal introduction. There is need to integrate One Health concepts into agricultural extension service provision in Uganda so as to enhance the management of such infectious diseases.

Key Words: Murbag Virus Disease; Lowland Grazing; Kween District; Land use Change