Supporting evidence-based interventions to achieve agricultural development goals in Tanzania

***Dr John Claxton**, International Project Manager at the Institute of Biodiversity Animal Health and Comparative Medicine writes:*

A new project, extending the work of Livestock, Livelihoods and Health, has recently been funded by the University of Edinburgh as part of its Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation-financed 'Supporting Evidence-Based Interventions to Achieve Agricultural Development Goals' programme.

Awarded to the University of Glasgow – with partners from the Nelson Mandela African Institution of Science and Technology (NMAIST), the Kilimanjaro Clinical Research Institute (KCRI), Global Animal Health Tanzania/Washington State University and the University of Otago, and in collaboration with the Zonal Veterinary Centre in Arusha, the Tanzanian Veterinary Laboratory Agency, the Moredun Research Institute and Napier University – the project will examine the impact of a range of diseases on abortion-related mortality in livestock. Building on the work already undertaken, the new project broadens the range of diseases investigated under the SEEDZ project of Livestock Livelihoods and Health to include protozoal pathogens such as *Neospora* caninum and *Toxoplasma gondii*, and several viral pathogens, including bovine viral diarrhoea (BVD) virus and bluetongue virus. Work will help to further develop disease surveillance mechanisms in northern Tanzania by establishing a surveillance platform to investigate abortion events, and other diseases, with the aim of developing effective and sustainable intervention strategies that will result in a reduction in mortality in cattle, sheep and goats.

The project will collate and analyse existing data on reproductive losses and mortality in Tanzanian cattle and small ruminants at national level and will generate new data on the seroprevalence of infection with abortigenic agents in livestock in smallholder, agropastoral and pastoral farming systems. The surveillance platform established as part of the project will generate prospective data on the aetiology, incidence and impact of abortion in livestock and will develop a framework for identifying and evaluating potential interventions to control the losses from these diseases.

The project formally launches on 5 May 2017, with an associated training event on 8 May 2017. Project staff based at NMAIST are supporting regional livestock officers of the Zonal Veterinary Centre and Tanzanian Veterinary Laboratory Agency in investigating cases of abortion. The KCRI, with support from the University of Otago, are carrying out additional diagnostic testing on samples collected in the field. The work in Tanzania is coordinated by Global Animal Health Tanzania, part of Washington State University.

The project is managed by the Institute of Biodiversity, Animal Health and Comparative Medicine at the University of Glasgow which, together with project partners, will define and coordinate the implementation of the project, carry out data analysis and develop appropriate intervention strategies. The Moredun Research Institute and Napier University will provide expertise on the collection, isolation and identification of specific pathogens.

The project runs from 1 March 2017 for 30 months.