# english black

# Package 88, Script 4

July 2009

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**“Spray me, I’m itchy”: What moo really means**

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**Notes to broadcaster**

Tick-borne diseases are a major economic issue in many parts of East, Southern and Central Africa. One tick-borne disease, East Coast Fever, kills a million cows each year in East Africa alone.

This script highlights the importance of cattle to the farmer. In many cases, a farmer’s very livelihood depends on cattle. Therefore, any sickness is a significant issue, and raises the chances of poverty and malnutrition.

Current methods of disease control are limited. Farmers’ use of acaricides – pesticides which are designed to control ticks – is hampered by rising prices and increasing acaricide resistance. The use of live vaccines, though proving successful in some areas, is often dependent on refrigeration facilities, and can be difficult in certain regions due to poorly developed infrastructure.

The best chance for success in disease control is to take an integrated approach, using a variety of methods. Measures which are successful against tickborne diseases include pasture management, effective fencing and rotational grazing where possible, to reduce the level of infestation, raising tick resistant cattle, and new methods of immunization in combination with strategic use of acaricides. It should be noted that livestock keepers are extremely well informed about ticks and know which tick produces which disease.

This script is a mini-drama which highlights the challenges associated with control of tick-borne diseases. Two ways to use this script are by simply adapting this drama for your audience or using it as inspiration to produce your own mini-drama on livestock diseases in your area.

*Fade up farm sounds – chickens and cows, sounds of birds. Then fade under conversation.*

**Father:** Son, I am a simple man. I follow the simple ways. These are my cows. One day, they will all be yours. Are you not proud? For us, cattle are wealth.

**Son:** Yes, father, I am very proud. But our wealth is at risk. Our neighbour has been losing his cattle.

**Father:** Yes, I know. This is because his daughter has the virus and his family is being punished for her wild ways. That is why his cattle are dying.

**Son:** No, father. Kala having AIDS has nothing to do with the loss of their cattle.

**Father:** Then how do you explain it, if not as an act of God?

**Son:** My teacher went to see the local veterinarian and learned that many cows in our region are getting sick.

**Father:** What do these animal doctors know? They keep their noses in books all day long. I wake up with our cattle, work with them, and see that they have a safe, peaceful night. I put my blood, sweat and tears into these cows.

**Son:** But father, if they are so important, wouldn’t you want to take the necessary actions to protect them? Let’s go to see the animal doctor now.

**Father:** Alright son, if it will make you happy. We’ll go see your doctor at sunrise. Now, go to bed; we have a big day ahead of us tomorrow.

*Fade up farm sounds for a few seconds, then out. Pause for two seconds, then sound of rooster repeatedly crowing.*

**Son:** Father, father… time to go to the veterinarian.

**Father:** But today is good weather for grazing. Must we?

**Son:** Father, you promised.

**Father:** Lead the way, son.

*Fade up farm sounds for a few seconds, then fade under conversation.*

**Neighbour:** Good morning neighbour. Where are you off to with your son and your cattle?

**Son:** We’re off to see the veterinarian.

**Neighbour:** (*Laughing*) Do you trust those silly doctors with your cattle? I thought you were wiser!

**Father:** (*Aside, quietly*) You see, son, you make me the laughing stock of the village with your modern ideas.

*Fade up farm sounds for a few seconds, then fade under conversation*.

**Veterinarian:** (*Coming on mic*) Hello good folk, what brings you and your cattle here today?

**Father:** (*Whispers to son*) Son, she is a woman; we cannot trust her to understand these complicated problems.

**Son:** (*Quietly, to father*) Shh. (*Normal voice*) Doctor, I have convinced my father to bring our cattle to see if they’re healthy.

**Veterinarian:** Well, let’s take a look at one of your cows. How about that one? She looks very thin.

**Father:** She’s not thin! She’s one of my best cows! I got her when I was very young.

**Veterinarian:** Is everything normal with her?

**Son:** She has been producing less milk lately.

**Veterinarian:** It appears that she has a damaged hide as well. These are signs of tick infestation. Let me take a look at her.

*Pause*. *Sounds of cow mooing.*

**Veterinarian:** Yes, this cow definitely has ticks.

**Father:** What do you mean?

**Veterinarian:** Ticks are little bugs that suck on the blood of cattle and even humans. If ticks are not treated, they can cause serious and sometimes fatal illnesses.

**Father:** Oh, but I thought the birds took care of those.

**Son:** The birds, father?

**Father:** Yes, the birds! They peck the bugs away.

**Son**: Father, that’s just an old wives’ tale.

**Veterinarian:** Well, birds like cattle egrets and oxpeckers *can* help to control insects. But these birds are not always enough.

**Father:** If what you’re saying is true, what can I do to help this cow?

**Veterinarian:** It’s not just that one cow. Your entire herd is at risk. Ticks spread disease. If one cow in your herd has ticks, your other cows are more likely to have ticks as well.

**Father:** You don’t know what you’re saying! You just want my money.

**Son:** (*Aside, quietly*) Listen to her, father – she knows what she’s talking about. She has helped many of the villagers’ herds, and they are better now.

**Father:** (*Aside, quietly*) What magical potion does this witch use to cure them?

**Son:** (*Aside, quietly*) She’s a doctor. She knows what she’s doing. It doesn’t matter that she’s a woman.

**Veterinarian:** You need to spray your herd with acaricides, a substance that controls and prevents tick infestations.

**Father:** Oh, and how much will this cost me?

**Veterinarian:** It depends on the type of treatment.

**Son:** How do we use acaricides for our cattle?

**Veterinarian:** Acaricides must always be applied in a safe and correct manner, with proper dosages, good equipment, and clean working conditions.

**Father:** I have heard of these sprays before. You veterinarians have us hardworking farmers return again and again for these treatments, and always ask for more money!

**Veterinarian:** It is true that the price of acaricides is rising. Also, it may be necessary to spray your herd several times for the treatment to be effective over the long term. The best way to control tick infestation is a method called integrated control.

**Son:** Ah yes, my teacher also taught us about integrated control for pest management.

**Father:** What? I do not know of this integrated control. My ancestors have been raising cattle long before all these new, expensive ideas!

**Son:** But father, many of these new methods are effective and will keep our cattle from getting sick.

**Veterinarian:** Integrated control means that, to be most effective in preventing ticks, several methods should be combined.

**Father:** Like what?

**Veterinarian:** Well, some important methods include, wherever possible, building sturdy fences around your land, making sure your pastures are well managed, and using rotational grazing to reduce the level of tick infestation.

**Father:** These are not new ideas! This “rotational grazing” you speak of has been practiced by our family for generations. We know to let the land rest for some time after grazing to allow time for new grass to grow.

**Veterinarian:** That is great! That is an important aspect of integrated tick control. Also, there are certain breeds of cattle that are more resistant to ticks. There are also new methods of immunization which, when used with acaricides, will help. Combining all these methods will greatly lower the risk of your cattle getting sick from tick-borne diseases.

**Son:** You mentioned new methods of immunization. Does this mean that there is a vaccine to protect our cattle and ourselves from disease?

**Veterinarian:** Yes, there is immunization using live vaccines. This means we can give an injection to help protect your cattle from a disease called East Coast Fever. This is best done in calves under six months of age, and you only need one dose! However, for other diseases which are transmitted by ticks, such as red-water fever and heartwater, we don’t use live vaccines, and your cattle need to be vaccinated more than once.

**Father**: This also sounds expensive!

**Veterinarian:** You are right. The cattle need to take antibiotics for several months after the East Coast Fever vaccine, and the cost of antibiotics is quite high too. Also, the vaccines need to be stored cold and this may not be possible for us here.

However, there is a lot of research being done right now to develop new vaccines to avoid such problems. For now, I’d recommend you use integrated control, starting with acaricide treatment. Later, we can work on a vaccination program for your cattle.

**Son:** How soon can we do this? I need our cattle healthy for when I present them to my girlfriend’s father for her hand in marriage.

**Veterinarian:** Bring them around tomorrow and I will have everything ready.

**Father:** Thank you doctor, I will be here tomorrow.

**Veterinarian:** Wait. Before you go, I must take a blood sample of your cow.

**Son:** What for?

**Veterinarian:** I must make sure your cow doesn’t have East Coast Fever.

**Father:** What exactly is this fever you speak of?

**Veterinarian:** It is a disease transmitted by ticks. It can result in death in as little as four weeks after the tick bite. Your whole herd can become infected. This disease has already killed one million cows this year in East Africa.

**Son:** How can you tell if your cows have this fever?

**Veterinarian:** Your cow will have a soft cough, nasal discharge, diarrhea, the eyes and gums are pale, and often an infected cow will lose its ability to walk. Other symptoms such as weakness, lethargy and loss of appetite are common to all tick-borne diseases.

**Father:** This does not sound like my cow!

**Veterinarian:** Just to be sure, I would like to check.

**Father:** Very well.

*Pause. Sounds of mooing.*

**Son:** See father, aren’t you glad we brought our cows in before it was too late?

**Father:** Yes son, this doctor may be able to help us. If she can, I will certainly tell all of our friends to come and see this woman doctor.

**Veterinarian:** All right, I think I have everything I need. I’ll see you tomorrow, and we’ll get started on helping your cows.

**Father:** Thank you, doctor, we’ll be here tomorrow.

## Acknowledgements

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