

## Outbreak

Written by admin

Monday, 27 June 2011 09:02 - Last Updated Saturday, 10 December 2011 13:55

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Outbreak!

By Wangari Murathe



Terry's worker David opened the gate for me. I had come a little early so that I would help her prepare refreshments for our monthly farmers meeting which we held by rotation in farmer's homes.

"She is at the cow shed. One of the cows is sick" David said, as he led me to the back of the main house where the cows were.

Terry was standing at the fence looking at her cow nicknamed "Lightening" She had been so named because she was quick and fast especially in eating. Usually when Terry came to see the cows, Lightening would come over to her to be petted. However, she now stood forlornly with her mouth dribbling saliva. Terry was holding some Lucerne twigs out for her and calling, but she was not responding. I stood to watch as the cow took a lame step towards her, stopped and then prepared to lie down.

"Praise the Lord, my sister" I said as I stepped closer to hug her, but she stepped back.

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“Don’t touch me right now” she said, and then realizing my puzzled look added, “Lightening has Foot and Mouth and I have been touching her, the veterinary doctor has just been here. I don’t want you to take the disease back to your cows.”

“Sorry”, I said. “Are the other cows okay?”

Terry depended on her dairy herd for her livelihood. She took great care of them; they were very healthy and produced a lot of milk. She was a hard worker and a woman of great faith. However she had had some serious misfortunes the previous year with the loss of her husband and her office job.

“The doctor said it is possible they all have it. He has left us medicine; antibiotics and stuff to disinfect their mouths, hooves and shed.”

“I heard that there was an outbreak in the area. I got mine vaccinated about a week ago.” I said.

“I had not heard, so mine are not.” Terry looked at me with misty eyes. She rarely came to our meetings where such things were discussed. I felt guilty because as the closest friend in the group, I should have warned her about the outbreak. I was silent as we went into the house.

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The meeting that month was very emotional. Many of the farmers already had sick animals. Some had bad sores in their mouths which made it difficult to eat. And many could not walk. We held prayers for our cows and beseeched God to spare them.

I went back home grateful that I had been spared but it was not to be. Both my two dairy cows and their calves got badly affected and one of the calves died. It took a long time for the surviving cows to get back their physical condition. Their milk production never fully recovered.

It is only during the next farmer's meeting that we realized that the cows that had been vaccinated were more severely affected. Many cows had died of the disease while others had to be destroyed because their hooves were severely affected. We called the veterinary doctor on phone but he had no satisfactory answer.

Of Terry's cows, only Lightening was affected and she soon recovered. Thank God for his mercy and care. He is the one who protects. *"Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labour in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stand guard in vain" Psalms 127:1.*

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