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Media alert from the Media Scanning & Verification Cell, IDSP-NCDC.

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| 4885                            | 11.09.2018                                                          | 12.09.2018     | Tumakuru<br>Karnataka | The Hindu<br>English Newspaper<br>11 <sup>th</sup> September, 2018/Page No. 05 |
| <b>Title:</b>                   | <b>Deadly disease stalks cattle in district Tumakuru, Karnataka</b> |                |                       |                                                                                |
| Action By<br>CSU, IDSP<br>-NCDC | Information communicated to DSU- Tumakuru, SSU-Karnataka            |                |                       |                                                                                |

Six head of cattle died in the past month in a village in Tumakuru district

A rare and deadly livestock disease has resurfaced in M. Hosuru, a village in Kunigal taluk, Tumakuru district. Dairy farmers are facing an uncertain future with six head of cattle having died in the last one month.

Malignant Catarrhal Fever (MCF), an infectious viral disease originally from South Africa that affects cattle, was first spotted in the State 10 years ago. It has neither a cure nor a vaccination that can prevent its spread.

As many as 70 households of Kunigal village are dependent on dairy farming. "In a matter of four days at the end of August, two of my cross-breed Jersey cows died from the disease. Each of them would give 20 litres of milk daily... Now, one more cow is infected, and it may not have too long to live," says Srinivas, a dairy farmer. His family has a Rs. 7-lakh loan taken to buy more cows. "I don't even have enough money to buy fodder for the two remaining cows. We've even cut down on food to stay afloat," he says.

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**Disclaimer:- This is a media alert subject to verification.**

**Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP), National Centre for Disease Control,  
Ministry Of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India**

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It was October 6, 2016 that the first case of the disease was spotted in the village, says Shashikant Budihal, Assistant Director, Animal Husbandry Department, Kunigal. "It is present in a 1.5-km radius of this village and is not found in any other village in the district," he says.

While villagers have started mounting pressure for compensation, Dr. Budihal says there is no provision for it under the present rules.

Scientists from the Institute of Animal Health and Veterinary Biologicals, Bengaluru, have descended on the village to collect blood samples. While they record villagers saying that they've lost 30 head of cattle in two years, doctors confirmed the death of 10 head of cattle because of MCF. "It is herpes virus that spreads from sheep to cattle. Once it strikes, the cattle have barely six days to live," says S.M. Byre Gowda, Director, IAH&VH, who accompanied the team for screening.

The team is screening all the sheep and goats in the village for the disease, and when identified, they will be isolated so to stem the spread.

Scientists are yet to find out how the disease, which was first identified among wildebeest in South Africa, came to India or even Karnataka. Dr. Gowda said it was first reported from Bannerghatta in a gaur nearly a decade ago, and has since led to a few cattle deaths in Anekal and elsewhere. "There was a recent research that showed that MCF virus is found in a quarter of the sheep and goats (which are carriers of the disease, but does not lead to death) in the State. This means that the virus is latent and sporadically reappears," he says.

### **Fear in the village**

In M. Hosuru, the sporadic recurrence of the disease is not only keeping villagers on tenterhooks, but is causing them to be isolated from the local cattle trading community. "Those from neighbouring villages refuse to send us cattle to plough our land. They fear that if they send their cattle, it will catch the disease here," says Kumar, another dairy farmer.

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