

One-Health approach to control brucellosis launched in Timor-Leste

20 June 2023

A new project to tackle brucellosis – a disease that can spread between animals and people - has officially launched in Timor-Leste today.

The '*Brucellosis Reduction Using Codesign Elements in Timor-Leste (BRUCE TL)*' Project, is a collaboration between Menzies School of Health Research (Menzies), the Timor-Leste Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, the National Institute of Public Health Timor-Leste - Ministry of Health, the Public Health Laboratory, and the Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory.

Commencing in Bobonaro Municipality, this project will work to strengthen the government and local community's ability to respond to bovine (cattle) brucellosis which has an impact on human health, animal health, livelihoods and food security.

It will utilise a One Health approach, which recognises the connection and balance needed between the health of humans, animals and the environment to achieve a solution.

Cattle are of high economic, social and cultural value to smallholder farmers in Timor-Leste. However, brucellosis heavily impacts on this, where infected livestock experience reduced weight gain, abortion and infertility. Being a zoonotic disease (meaning it spreads from animals to humans), it can also affect those working closely with cattle and can be passed via the food chain, if infected products are consumed.

Tackling the impacts of brucellosis will help to reduce occupational health hazards of working with livestock, as well as increase productivity and the safety of food in Timor-Leste.

This research is made possible through financial support from the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) and Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

The project is scheduled to run until the end of 2025.

Find out more about our work in Timor-Leste by visiting the Menzies website https://www.menzies.edu.au/page/Research/Global_and_Tropical_Health/Timor-Leste/

Quotes attributable to Chief-Investigator of the BRUCE-TL Project and Menzies Senior Research Fellow, Dr Shawn Ting:

"This project invites the community to gather evidence, co-design and implement brucellosis control within their village."

"It also has the ability to inform longer-term, national strategies. The framework for a One Health response to brucellosis at the village level could be scaled up for implementation at the municipal or national levels or modified to tackle other health priorities for the country."

Quotes attributable to National Director of Veterinary – Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF), Dr Joanita Bendita Jong:

“In settings where there are limited resources and relatively high prevalence of brucellosis in cattle, such as Timor-Leste, traditional top-down government approaches such as test-and-slaughter are impractical and likely to be unacceptable to farmer. This project offers a different way to address the issue.”

Quote attributable to the President of the National Institute of Public Health Timor-Leste (INSP-TL), Dr Merita A. A. Monteiro:

“The BRUCE-TL project illustrates the interdependence of human and animal health and the importance of multidisciplinary collaboration in preventing and tackling brucellosis. This puts the One-Health concept into action and highlights its importance towards the economy of our farmers/community.

“INSP-TL and Menzies will continue to work alongside to strengthen health research capacity in Timor-Leste to facilitate evidence-based interventions or decisions.”

Quotes attributable to ACIAR Research Program Manager for Livestock Systems, Dr Anna Okello:

“Contributing to evidence on the societal and public health benefits of animal disease control is a key pillar of the ACIAR Livestock Systems strategy. As a foodborne disease, brucellosis research also fits into the ACIAR focus on strengthening food systems and the objective of understanding the role of and better supporting the business case for One Health approaches within local communities.”

ENDS

Media contact:

In Timor-Leste: Fausta da Costa, Communications Officer,
Phone: +670 7738 1210 | Email: fausta.dacosta@menzies.edu.au

In Australia, contact: media@menzies.edu.au

Menzies School of Health Research:

Menzies School of Health Research (Menzies) is one of Australia’s leading medical research institutes dedicated to improving the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and a leader in global and tropical research into life-threatening illnesses. Menzies continues to translate research into effective partnerships and programs in communities across Australia and the Asia-Pacific region.