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Thursday, 18 January 2024

**STATEMENT: Urgent Concerns Regarding Animal Poisoning in Vuda Area**

We are alarmed by reports of planned animal poisoning in the Vuda area on Monday, 22nd January 2024, and feel compelled to share our stance.

Agriculture is a vital industry, and at Animals Fiji, we provide livestock treatment services across our four clinics. While we recognize the challenge of livestock loss due to dog attacks, we believe that addressing stray animals is a complex issue tied to larger problems like poverty and irresponsible animal ownership.

Poisoning and shooting stray animals, particularly dogs, only results in a short-term temporary solution as new animals quickly replace those killed. Such methods also lead to disputes and social issues in rural communities. We advocate for comprehensive, humane, and scientifically proven solutions to manage stray animals. Collaborative efforts between farmers, government agencies, and animal welfare organisations can lead to the development of strategies such as:

- Data collection for monitoring of effective interventions;
- Targeted spaying, neutering, and gelding;
- Microchipping for pets and ear tagging for livestock;
- Increased community awareness about responsible animals ownership
- Regulating animal ownership and monitoring compliance
- Exploring other options like using shelter dogs as guardian dogs for flocks

In line with Ministry of Agriculture procedures, resorting to poisoning should be the last option after exhausting alternative methods like trapping, spaying, and neutering. Animals Fiji has engaged with Lautoka City Council and Ministry of Agriculture in data collection and population management in Lautoka, but limited funding hinders the speed and efficiency of our progress.

We urge the government to prioritise humane alternatives, collaborate with stakeholders including Animals Fiji, and work towards sustainable solutions that balance farmers' concerns with the safety of animals, humans, and the environment.

Animals Fiji welcomes discussions and seeks collaborative efforts with the government, local communities, businesses, and NGOs to address this issue.

Casey Quimby, on behalf of the Animals Fiji Team  
Co-Founder and Managing Trustee