

**THE IMPACT OF EAST COAST FEVER ON AFRICAN HOMESTEAD SOCIETY IN
THE NATAL COLONY 1901-1910**

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation looks at the impact of East Coast Fever on African homestead society in Natal in the period 1901-1910. The disease broke out in Natal at the beginning of 1904. With the realization that East Coast Fever was another lethal epizootic, the Natal Colonial Government introduced measures to control the spread of the disease and finally eradicate it. The campaign was, however, not successful. The disease thus spread throughout the colony and led to the loss of many cattle owned by Africans. By 1909 not more than four divisions in the colony remained free of the disease. The death of many cattle deprived Africans of the means of extensive cultivation, the source of income for the payment of rents and taxes, and *Ilobolo*. Many African males were forced to leave their homesteads for the towns and the mining sector in search of work. This eventually changed the nature of the homestead society.

DECLARATION

“I declare that **The impact of East Coast Fever on African homestead society in the Natal Colony 1901-1910** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references”.

SIGNATURE
(MR M.I. Thabede)

DATE

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GLOSSARY

<i>izinduna</i>	headmen
<i>ilobolo</i>	cattle or any other property that man has to pay for marriage to be sanctified
<i>umuzi</i>	homestead
<i>amasi</i>	curdled and fermented milk
<i>izinqolobane</i>	grain storage

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This area of study has been chosen as part of an attempt to examine East Coast Fever as a factor in the disintegration of the African homestead economy at the beginning of the twentieth century and to consider its social ramifications. During the nineteenth century an African homestead had been an economic and social unit that “consisted of a central cattle kraal surrounded by the huts or households belonging to the wives, dependent relatives and widowed mother of the head”.¹ As a patriarchal society the husband was the head of the homestead responsible for the management of the resources, most importantly the allocation of cattle to each household for subsistence food, namely, milk and agricultural production. Another importance of cattle was that they acted as stored capital.² A homestead had access to a plot of land distributed by chiefs and *izinduna*.³

Undoubtedly, the decrease in the number of cattle each homestead possessed would have repercussions for the inhabitants given the crucial role played by cattle. Therefore a study on the impact of East Coast Fever on the African homestead society is a relevant historical endeavour. The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the extent to which East Coast Fever attacked and destroyed cattle, the mainstay in homesteads and whether it accelerated the process of economic decline and social fragmentation in African rural society.⁴

Discussions of cattle diseases in colonial Natal and Zululand have tended to concentrate

1. John Lambert, *Betrayed trust: Africans and the state in colonial Natal* (Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 1995), p 39.

2. Aran Mackinnon, “The impact of European land delimitations and expropriations on Zululand, 1880 – 1920” (M.A. dissertation, University of Natal, Durban, 1990), p 3.

3. Ibid.

4. John Laband and Paul Thompson, “The reduction of Zululand, 1878 – 1904”, in A. Duminy and B. Guest, eds, *Natal and Zululand from the earliest times to 1910: A new history* (Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 1989), p 223.

on the disastrous rinderpest epizootic that wiped out no less than eighty five percent of African –owned cattle in the late 1890s.⁵ In *Betrayed trust: Africans and the State in Colonial Natal*, John Lambert has provided an in depth analysis of the economic and social hardships resulting from Rinderpest in the colony of Natal, excluding Zululand. For instance, the decimation of cattle led to serious *Amasi* shortages. This had dire implications for dietary requirements for both young and adult Africans, as cattle were the source of milk that was used to ferment *Amasi*. Problems with *Ilobolo* were encountered which led to many difficulties. It became increasingly difficult for Africans not to depend on the white settler community in Natal and the mining sector in the Witwatersrand for survival as the loss of cattle “struck at the very basis of the *umuzi* and accelerated a process of proletarianization in African society”.⁶ According to Charles Ballard, apart from the disruption in the subsistence of the homesteads, cattle losses deprived those Africans engaged in transport riding of the means to earn money.⁷ Moreover, Rinderpest, amongst other factors, made Africans less capable of resisting pressures such as discriminatory measures introduced by successive Natal colonial governments.⁸ Thus a discussion on East Coast Fever must place the disease in the context of a decline in the position of African homesteads that had begun by the 1890s.

Historians of Natal and Zululand such as Lambert, John Laband and Paul Thompson refer to East Coast Fever as one of the contributory factors to the decline of the African homestead society. However, the tendency has been to mention the disease in passing. Laband and Thompson, for example, refer to East Coast Fever in the context of the general dissolution of the homestead economy and of social relations caused by a series of natural disasters which were part of a wider pattern of climatic deterioration and pestilence that began in the late nineteenth century.⁹ Shula Marks cites East Coast Fever

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid., p 155.

7. Charles Ballard, “The repercussions of Rinderpest: cattle plague and peasant decline in colonial Natal”, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, vol. 9, no. 3 (1988), p 449.

8. John Lambert, “Africans in Natal, 1880 – 1899: continuity, change and crisis in a rural society”, (D. Litt et Phil. thesis, University of South Africa, 1986), p 378.

9. Laband and Thompson, “The reduction of Zululand, 1878 – 1904”, p 223.

as one of the reinforcing factors in the deteriorating relations between Africans and the colonial state largely because of the increasing tax burden.¹⁰

Lambert, particularly in his two chapters, “The impoverishment of the Natal Peasantry 1893 – 1910”, in Guest and Settlers, *Enterprise and exploitation in a Victorian colony* and “From independence to rebellion: African Society in crisis”, in Duminy and Guest, *Natal and Zululand from earliest times to 1910* is of the view that East Coast Fever hastened the decline of African rural life, a process that had been initiated by other natural disasters and by the colonial government policies towards Africans namely repressive legislation and increase taxation and rents.¹¹ In the wider South African context, William Beinart’s *Twentieth century South Africa* hints at how East Coast Fever hampered cultivation in Pondoland and accelerated the migrant labour system.¹²

Paul Cranefield’s book: *Science and Empire: East Coast Fever in Rhodesia and Transvaal* is probably the most authoritative historical work on East Coast Fever in the broader Southern African region. Most significantly, apart from his discussion on the outbreak of the East Coast Fever and the attempts to fight the disease, Cranefield brings to the fore the important role of the bacteriologists, particularly Dr Robert Koch, in the discovery of the East Coast Fever virus in Tanganyika in 1897.¹³ This information was invaluable although it took about three years for the region to accept that East Coast Fever was a new disease. As a result of Koch’s contribution to bacteriology, governments and veterinarians were able to distinguish East Coast Fever from other cattle diseases such as Redwater that first appeared in Natal in 1870-1871.¹⁴ However, it was difficult to

10. Shula Marks, *Reluctant rebellion: The 1906 – 8 disturbances in Natal* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1970), p 139.

11. John Lambert, “The impoverishment of the Natal Peasantry 1893 –1910”, in B. Guest and J. Sellers, eds., *Enterprise and exploitation in a Victorian colony: aspects of the economic and social history of colonial Natal* (Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 1985), p 301-304.

12. William Beinart, *Twentieth century South Africa* (Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 1994), p 33.

13. Paul Cranefield, *Science and Empire: East Coast Fever in Rhodesia and the Transvaal* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991), p 13.

14. Gwyn Campbell, “Disease, cattle and slaves: The development of trade between Natal and Madagascar, 1875 – 1904”, *African Economic History*, no. 19 (1990 – 1991), p 108.

distinguish between the two diseases because of the similarities.¹⁵

In chapter two it will be shown how ignorance pertaining to the nature of East Coast Fever enabled the disease to spread insidiously in the Transvaal and Natal. Co-operation between veterinarians and government officials in the region and controversies regarding measures to combat East Coast Fever are extensively dealt with in Cranefield's book. He examines, for example, the Bloemfontein Conference of 1903 where scientists and government representatives met and there was disagreement between the Transvaal government officials led by Stewart Stockman and Arnold Theiler, and Dr Koch on the effectiveness of inoculation.¹⁶ With such crucial information on East Coast Fever in the region, Cranefield's book has been invaluable for my discussion in chapters two and three.

The articles: "East Coast Fever in socio- historical context, A case study from Tanzania" and "Disease, cattle and slaves: The development of trade between Natal and Madagascar, 1875 – 1904", by James Giblin and Gwyn Campbell respectively were also useful in providing an insight into the nature of East Coast Fever and its impact on cattle owners. James Giblin looks at East Coast Fever in Tanzania from a theoretical perspective and offers explanations about parasites that caused East Coast Fever.¹⁷ Gwyn Campbell focuses on the impact of East Coast Fever on the cattle trade between Madagascar and Natal. He shows that when East Coast Fever broke out in Madagascar, cattle imports from the island dropped sharply and those cattle already imported into the colony were slaughtered to prevent the spread of the disease.¹⁸ This, Debra Fyvie argues, can be related to the favouring by certain government officials in Natal of slaughtering suspected cattle as part of the campaign against East Coast Fever.¹⁹

15. Cranefield, *Science and Empire*, p 13.

16. *Ibid.*, p 184.

17. James Giblin, "East Coast Fever in socio – historical context: A case study from Tanzania", *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, vol. 23, no. 3 (1990), pp 403-408.

18. Campbell, " Disease, cattle and slaves: The development of trade between Natal and Madagascar", p 121.

19. Debra Fyvie, "East Coast Fever in the colony of Natal, 1903-1909", (Honours essay, University of Natal, Durban, 1991), p 49.

In her honours essay, “East Coast Fever in the colony of Natal 1903-1909”, Fyvie touches only marginally on the impact of East Coast Fever on the African homestead. She looks mainly at the outbreak of East Coast Fever and at attempts to contain and eradicate the disease. She discusses the quarantine measures, temperature camps, the role of inspectors, restrictions on the movement of cattle, branding, dipping and slaughter of suspected infected animals.²⁰

In her History honours essay “The control of East Coast Fever in Natal from the early 1900’s to 1957,” Isabel Schellnack has also written about the spread of East Coast Fever and attempts to contain the disease in Natal from the beginning of the twentieth century to the early second half of the century. Interestingly, Schellnack reveals that Natal was the only province where East Coast Fever was detected in 1951.²¹ It would however be unfair to solely blame the Natal colonial authorities and later the Natal Provincial Administration for the spread of East Coast Fever in Natal after 1910 because East Coast Fever as a tick-borne disease does not respect boundaries and could have come from the north of the province. More importantly, she notes that East Coast Fever was responsible for the death of an estimated 5.5 million cattle in South Africa during the first half of the twentieth century.²²

David Manamela, in his dissertation entitled “The history of ticks and tick-borne diseases in cattle in Natal and Zululand (KwaZulu-Natal) from 1896 to the present” discusses the relationship between different species of ticks and cattle diseases, and similarities between East Coast Fever and other tick-borne diseases.²³ The dissertation looks at the outbreak, spread and measures to control East Coast Fever and its impact in a general manner. Like other dissertations cited, it does not look at the impact of East Coast Fever specifically on the African homestead society.

20. *Ibid.*, pp 22-58.

21. Isabel Schellnack, “The control of East Coast Fever in Natal from the early 1900’s to 1957”, (Honours essay, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 1986), p 81.

22. *Ibid.*, p 82.

23. David Manamela, “The history of ticks and tick-borne diseases in cattle in Natal and Zululand (KwaZulu-Natal) from 1896 to the present”, (M.A. dissertation, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 2001), pp 7 -17.

The purpose of my study is to discuss measures that were implemented in most parts of the Natal Colony in order to examine their effects on Africans. In this study too, by focusing on the homestead economy my concern is to discuss the impact of East Coast Fever on those Africans living a traditional lifestyle on reserves, crown lands and as tenants on white-owned farms. I do not discuss the position of the African Christian, (*amakholwa*) community.

This study was undertaken through the use of both primary and secondary source material. While the secondary sources already cited proved extremely useful, primary sources particularly those not previously used were of great value. However, no interviews were carried out since the period under consideration is sufficiently distant. I was disappointed to discover that *Ilanga LaseNatal*, an *IsiZulu* medium newspaper does not have much information on the African homesteads regarding the outbreak, spread and devastating impact of East Coast Fever. *The Natal Reports on the condition of the Native population, 1897 – 1904* were helpful in dealing with the socio-economic situation in which East Coast Fever appeared.²⁴ The Veterinary Departmental Reports in the *Natal Agricultural Journals and Mining Records, 1904 – 1907* and *Natal Agricultural Journals, 1908-1909* have valuable information on the outbreak of East Coast Fever and attempts to contain it.²⁵

Another publication that was of great assistance was *East Coast Fever: Acts Regulations and Orders in Force* published by the colony's Department of Agriculture in 1908. This filled the gaps encountered in the Veterinary reports pertaining to the campaign against East Coast Fever. Care was however taken in the use of this source because it refers to regulations promulgated before as well as after 1904. In such cases it is pointed out that these regulations appeared in an amended form in the post 1904 period. For example the fencing Act No.6 of 1907²⁶ in the *Legislative Assembly Papers* provided information on

24. Report on the Native Population of the Province of Zululand for the year 1904 by the Civil Commissioner, Natal, *Report on the Native population, 1904*, pp 89 -111.

25. See The Natal Agricultural Journals and mining Records, vols. VII-XII, 1904-1909.

26. Natal, Legislative Assembly, fifth session, fifth Parliament, L. A. no. 4, 3 November 1909, *Sessional Papers, 1909-1910*, p 22.

debates in the Natal colonial Parliament on East Coast Fever.²⁷

The Natal colonial Statistical Year Books, 1901–1909 were infrequently used because in certain publications information on parts of Zululand was missing despite the fact that it had been annexed to Natal in 1897. Secondly, statistics for certain years completely contradict evidence by magistrates whose information can be relied upon because they were more in touch with the divisions than other government officials. In the period under study, for instance, there were no recorded numbers of cattle for most of the Zululand divisions in the statistical year book for the year 1907.²⁸ Statistics for 1908 show an improvement in the number of cattle in the colony whereas an analysis of the reports by magistrates in the divisions reveal the deterioration of the situation.²⁹ Indeed historians have raised concerns about the accuracy of the statistics towards the end of the nineteenth century in the colony and it would seem that the situation had not yet been rectified in the first decade of the twentieth century.³⁰ Thus statistics on cattle in the text should be viewed as estimates.

I have relied heavily on the Natal colonial Department of Native Affairs, *annual reports*, 1905–1909. I was unable to use an annual report for the year 1910 because Natal became part of the Union of South Africa in the same year. The reports were of great value on the impact of East Coast Fever on African homesteads. Reports of the magistrates, health officials, Secretary and Under Secretary for Native Affairs and District Native Commissioners and the Commissioner for Zululand are available in these volumes. Most importantly, these officials were in direct contact with Africans and at times could publicly express their genuine concern on behalf of Africans.³¹

Evidence in the *Native Affairs Commission of 1906–7* and its Report provided relevant information for the discussion. Africans raised complaints against heavy taxation, high

27. *Ibid.*, p 20.

28. Natal, *Statistical Year Book*, 1907, p 96.

29. See for example Magisterial reports, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1908, p 35.

30. Lambert, “Africans in Natal, 1880-1899”, p xvi.

31. See the Reports by the District Native Commissioners of Districts no 1, no. 2, no. 3 and no. 4, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1909.

rents, the impact of the Bhambatha Rebellion and more significantly, there were complaints against East Coast Fever regulations in a considerable number of divisions in both Natal and Zululand.³² I was able to establish a link between East Coast Fever and other factors that contributed to the socio-economic deterioration in the African homesteads from an unofficial point of view. Information was also obtained from *The James Stuart Archive* edited by John Wright and Colin Webb on African values and belief systems. These volumes can be very useful to any writer whose knowledge of Zulu customs and traditions is limited. They reflect the knowledge and views of Africans in Natal through interviews conducted by James Stuart in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century.³³

Minute Papers containing correspondences between the magistrates and Secretaries for Native Affairs, and between the Veterinary Departmental officials contain useful information. Some reveal misunderstandings between certain officials within the Natal colonial state during the campaign against East Coast Fever.³⁴ More importantly for this study they show that there were officials who accepted the difficulties that Africans faced during the campaign. Lastly, A. M. Diesel's publication: "The campaign against East Coast Fever in South Africa" of the Government Veterinary Services Division shows that the campaign to eradicate East Coast Fever was a mammoth task, as it lasted almost half a century in South Africa.³⁵

The abundance of historical writings on Natal and Zululand provided important background material. Most notably, chapters in Andrew Duminy and Bill Guest's volume: *Natal and Zululand from the earliest times to 1910*. These include John Wright

32. See for example evidence by Socwatsha, Sotobe and Sibindi, Natal, *Native Affairs Commission 1906 – 7, Evidence*, pp 709, 828 and 844 respectively.

33. Colin de B. Webb and John Wright, eds, *The James Stuart Archive*, vols. 1-5 (Durban, Killie Campbell Africana Library and Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 1976-2001).

34. See for example, SNA, NA, Papers, Nos. 751-920, 1907, Minute Paper, Magistrate, Vryheid and Ngotshe divisions, 23 March 1907.

35. A. M. Diesel, "The campaign against East Coast Fever in South Africa", *Onderstepoort Journal of Veterinary Science and Animal Industry*, vol. 23, no. 1 and no. 2, March 1948, pp 21-27.

and Carolyn Hamilton: “Traditions and Transformation: The Phongolo Mzimkhulu region in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and the Zulu Kingdom 1828–79: African State formation” has useful information on the Zulu political system. “The reduction of Zululand 1878–1904”, by John Laband and Paul Thompson deals with the turbulent times in Zululand and shows how they precipitated disintegration of social and economic life of the Zululand African homestead society by the beginning of the twentieth century.³⁶ These historical works, however, tend to focus on the decline of a traditional society in the context of the relationship between the Zulu kings and the colonial state in Natal. Since the object of this historical endeavour is to examine the impact of East Coast Fever on the African homestead, John Lambert’s *Betrayed trust: Africans and the state in colonial Natal* offers a more relevant and useful information on the homestead society. The book examines the nature of the African homestead economy and its changing fortunes from the mid-nineteenth century to early twentieth century.³⁷ Although the work is on the changes in homestead life between the Thukela and Mzimkhulu rivers, the characteristics of a homestead discussed in the book also apply to a Zulu traditional dwelling between the Thukela and Phongolo rivers.³⁸

The dissertation is divided into five chapters. Chapter two deals with the outbreak of East Coast Fever in Southern Africa and touches on the work of Dr Robert Koch to isolate East Coast Fever from other cattle diseases. The chapter discusses confusion regarding the nature of East Coast Fever mainly because of the similarities between East Coast Fever and Redwater. The importance of the Bloemfontein and Cape conferences to the campaign against East Coast Fever and how discussions and resolutions at these conferences shaped the reaction of white settler community in Natal in the wake of the outbreak of the disease form part of the discussion. The outbreak of East Coast Fever in Natal and Zululand is looked at. The chapter also outlines the impact of Rinderpest on African homestead society and central role played by cattle in the homestead society.

36. Laband and Thompson, “The reduction of Zululand 1878–1904”, pp 216-224.

37. Lambert, *Betrayed trust*.

38. Mackinnon, “The impact of land delimitations and expropriations on Zululand”, p 3.

Chapter three focuses on the attempts to contain and eradicate East Coast Fever. The introduction of quarantine zones and the fencing of farms are examined in the discussion. The study looks at the government's intention regarding the provision of loans for fencing of farms, fencing in African reserves, the establishment of advisory committees, the dipping of cattle and the lack of communication between magistrates, chiefs and homestead heads that led to anger and despair in many homestead communities. The chapter also discusses how the poll tax and the Bhambatha rebellion contributed to the spread and the devastation of East Coast Fever and the deterioration of relations between the Africans and Colonial State.

Chapter four begins with a breakdown of cattle losses in the homesteads between 1904 and 1910. It shows that from 1904 to 1906 few divisions in the colony suffered huge cattle losses. The numbers increased from 1907 to 1909. By 1909 not more than four divisions in the Natal Colony were free from the ravages of East Coast Fever.³⁹ The discussion then looks at the impact of East Coast Fever on land cultivation, the use of the hoes because of the lack of oxen, the use of donkeys and hiring of white farmers to do ploughing for Africans. The chapter looks at the mechanisms used by Africans to ameliorate food shortages, namely, the purchase of grain and the migrant labour system. There is a discussion on the growing indebtedness mainly due to the loss of cattle in the homesteads and how it contributed to the migrant labour system. Chapter five is the conclusion.

To conclude, this chapter has outlined the purpose of this historical work. It was indicated that historical works on the Natal and Zululand history tend to mention East Coast Fever in passing when dealing with the decline of the African traditional way of life in Natal Colony during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries due to human agency and natural factors. Thus it is crucial to look at how East Coast Fever, through the destruction of cattle, contributed greatly to underdevelopment and social decline in African

39. Report by the Secretary For Native Affairs For Year 1909, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1909, p v.

homestead communities. The chapter assessed the main sources that were used, both primary and secondary and finally, outlined the content of each chapter in the dissertation. Chapter two begins with a discussion on how Southern Africa, in general, woke up to the news of the devastating spread of East Coast Fever.

CHAPTER 2

THE OUTBREAK OF EAST COAST FEVER

This chapter focuses on the outbreak and spread of East Coast Fever in Natal in the period 1904-1910 and the reaction by both whites and Africans to the spread of the disease. However, an outline of the spread of East Coast Fever in Southern Africa and a brief explanation on the nature of East Coast Fever is essential because by 1904 the disease had become a regional problem.¹ This will also provide a better understanding of the type of problem that the Natal colonial authorities faced. In addition the way in which the colonial government in Natal reacted to the spread of East Coast Fever was largely influenced by the events to the north of the colony.

By the end of the nineteenth century, East Coast Fever was ravaging cattle herds in Tanganyika from where it was transmitted, in 1900, to Mozambique by infected cattle that were transported by ship from Tanganyika to the ports of Beira and Delagoa Bay. By October 1901 the disease had crossed the border into Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), the first outbreak occurring in Umtali in the eastern highlands.² According to Paul Cranefield and James Giblin, East Coast Fever had been in existence for years in Tanganyika. Giblin reckons that East Coast Fever was endemic in Tanganyika and that before the advent of German administration, the Zigua people had been able to contain its infection in their herds. For example, the Zigua people controlled the spread of the disease through the burning of trees and clearing of long grass. Cattle would then be moved to other pastoral areas.³ The Zigua people rightly perceived grass to be the breeding ground for ticks, the carriers of a number of cattle diseases including East Coast Fever. After the establishment of colonial rule, however, they were no longer able to do so and East Coast Fever became a dangerous disease.

1. Cranefield, *Science and Empire*, p 190.

2. Schellnack, "The control of East Coast Fever in Natal", p 1.

3. Giblin, "East Coast Fever in socio - historical context", pp 403-412.

In 1897, Robert Koch, a German scientist and one of the pioneers in modern bacteriology in Southern Africa, made a crucial discovery. Koch was the first scientist to scientifically identify the symptoms of East Coast Fever while touring Tanganyika on a German Government assignment. Koch named the disease African Coast Fever because he believed that East Coast Fever had long been entrenched along the east coast of Africa.⁴ Although Koch gave the disease this name, it was still unclear whether East Coast Fever was a completely new disease or whether it was a variation of an existing disease such as Redwater or Corridor Disease. Redwater and Corridor Disease like East Coast Fever are cattle epizootics but they are caused by parasites called *Babesta bigemia* and *Theileria laurencei* respectively.⁵ One year later in 1898, Koch referred to the parasites that cause East Coast Fever as being only an immature stage or variant form of the pear-shaped parasite that causes Redwater.⁶

After more than a decade of research by both Koch and Arnold Theiler, a Swiss Bacteriologist working in the Transvaal, it transpired that East Coast Fever was transmitted by a parasite known as *Theileria parva*, named by Theiler, and because of this, it was then classified as a separate disease and officially known as East Coast Fever.⁷ Koch was not the only one with a mistaken identification of East Coast Fever. When the disease broke out in Rhodesia in 1901, the colonial government, on the advice of the veterinarians, regarded the disease as Rhodesian Redwater.⁸ Certain officials in the Natal colony did not escape this misconception. Reporting on the first cases of the outbreak of East Coast Fever in 1904 G. W. Armstrong, the Magistrate of Ingwavuma Division, spoke of the spread of Rhodesian Redwater in the Magistracy.⁹

The rapid spread of East Coast Fever in Rhodesia caused consternation amongst farmers. The farmers viewed the situation as very ominous and feared that many of their cattle

4. Cranefield, *Science and Empire*, pp. xi, 13.

5. Geoffrey West, *Black's Veterinary Dictionary* (London A. and C. Black (1992), p 181.

6. Cranefield, *Science and Empire*, p 13.

7. *Ibid.*, pp 242-249.

8. *Ibid.*, p 12.

9. *Natal Blue Book Departmental reports*, 1903, p C 10.

would be decimated given the rate at which the disease was transmitted from one district to another in the colony. By January 1902 the disease had spread from Umtali to all the major districts in Rhodesia, namely Salisbury, Gwelo and Bulawayo.¹⁰ By the middle of 1902 the disease had crossed the Limpopo River and appeared in the Transvaal. There, again, there was no certainty as to the nature of the disease and, as result, neither the authorities nor the farmers were certain about what they were confronting. The authorities were inclined to think that, whether or not the disease was a new one, it should be handled as if it were new. Farmers, particularly Boer farmers, on the other hand, were bitterly opposed to the attempts by the Transvaal government to control the disease. Their resistance stemmed from the economic hardships they were experiencing as a result of measures adopted by the Transvaal government and the perceived harsh treatment by the government. By the time they woke up to the seriousness of the situation the damage had already been done and by 1910 there were very few cattle in the Transvaal.¹¹

In the main, similarities between East Coast Fever and Redwater or Texas Fever might have contributed to the incorrect identification of East Coast Fever. Redwater like East Coast Fever is a tick borne disease. Both epizootics are common during warm and rainy seasons. Areas that fell victim to East Coast Fever receive rainfall in summer, which is characterized by high temperatures, the favourable conditions for tick reproduction. These areas receive more than 500 mm of rain per annum and at an altitude up to about 2.100 meters above sea level.¹² Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Mozambique and the south - east areas of the present Republic of South Africa do not normally receive less than 400mm of summer rainfall annually.¹³ Moreover an attack of East Coast Fever can cause Redwater to reappear in an animal previously recovered from Redwater.¹⁴ East Coast Fever is transmitted by the brown ear- tick known as *Rhipicelapus Appendiculatus* .¹⁵

10. Cranefield, *Science and Empire*, pp 4-5.

11. *Ibid.*, pp 200-201.

12. Giblin, "East Coast Fever in socio – historical context", p 405.

13. "World Climatology", *The Times Atlas of the World* (London, Times Books Limited, 1987), p 2.

14. *Ibid.*

15. Giblin, "East Coast Fever in socio – historical context", p 403.

The disease can also be transmitted by a brown-pitted tick referred to as *Rhipicelapus simus*. There are four stages in the life of cycle of these ticks: eggs, larva, nymph and adult.¹⁶

Animal affected by East Coast Fever develop a high fever, swollen lymph nodes and enlargement of lymphoid patches in the intestine (Peyers Patches). The advanced stage of infection includes emaciation, which together with edema water logging may cause immediate death.¹⁷ Furthermore, one of the frustrating aspects of the disease is that the animal at first appears healthy, making an early diagnosis practically impossible, unless blood smears are taken for the microscopic detection of parasites.¹⁸

When the news of the spread of East Coast Fever in the Transvaal in 1902 reached Natal, the colonial government, it would seem, realized that the disease could be easily transmitted to Natal due to the colony's proximity to the Transvaal.¹⁹ Certainly, cattle even on their own would be able to move from one side to the other especially in areas where there was no fence thus spreading the lethal epizootic. As a result Herbert Watkins-Pitchford, the Government Bacteriologist and Director of the Veterinary Department in Natal, was sent to Rhodesia with a view to ascertaining the susceptibility of Natal cattle to the new disease. Watkins-Pitchford took eight healthy cattle for experimental purposes. The cattle were to be transported via the port of Beira to Rhodesia. All those cattle died in Rhodesia. Interestingly enough the cattle were presumed to have been immunized against Redwater.²⁰ This was a further testimony that East Coast Fever and Redwater were two different cattle diseases.

The journey by Wakins-Pitchford to Rhodesia in 1902 was not the last proactive step by

16. Fyvie, "East Coast Fever in the colony of Natal", pp 3-4.

17. Cranefield, *Science and Empire*, p 13.

18. Fyvie, "East Coast Fever in the colony of Natal", p 3.

19. Bill Guest, "The new economy, Natal in the shadow of the Transvaal, 1886 – 1899", in Duminy and Guest, eds, *Natal and Zululand from the earliest times to 1910, A new history* , p 308.

20. Cranefield, *Science and Empire*, p 57.

the colonial state in Natal. In December 1903, the colony's Veterinary officials including Watkins- Pitchford attended the Bloemfontein Conference. The conference was convened in the wake of the spread of East Coast Fever in Mozambique, Rhodesia and the Transvaal.²¹ Natal was to gain valuable information pertaining to the campaign against East Coast Fever mainly because influential figures in the field of Veterinary Science were among the delegates at the conference. Secondly, Rhodesia and the Transvaal had already begun to implement a number of measures in the fight against East Coast Fever. The influential participants included Steward Stockman, the Government Veterinary Surgeon in the Transvaal, Arnold Theiler and Charles Gray.²² The most prominent scientist was Dr. Robert Koch. Koch was regarded by many as an authority in epizootiological research. His discovery of East Coast Fever in 1897 had indeed been a major scientific breakthrough.

Opinions expressed at the Bloemfontein conference on East Coast Fever gave the Natal delegates a clear indication on what the colony would be up against should Rhodesia and the Transvaal fail to contain the disease. Not surprisingly, most of the key suggestions put forward at the conference on how to deal with East Coast Fever were central in the Natal Colony's campaign to control and get rid of the scourge. For example, the Natal colonial authorities included the fencing of farms in the campaign against the disease and was regarded as one of the best methods of preventing the spread of contagious disease.²³ Steward Stockman and Arnold Theiler were the main proponents of this measure in the struggle against East Coast Fever.²⁴

In view of these developments, the journey to Rhodesia and participation at the Bloemfontein conference, it is likely that the outbreak of East Coast Fever in Natal would have come as no surprise to the white cattle owners. It was easy for the white stockowners to quickly get crucial information from the Natal Government officials

21. Schellnack. "The control of East Coast Fever in Natal", p 1.

22. Cranefield, *Science and Empire*, pp 182-195.

23. Schellnack, "The control of East Coast Fever in Natal", p 19.

24. Cranefield, *Science and Empire*, p 183.

pertaining to agricultural matters. In the early twentieth century the rural white farming sector dominated successive colonial governments.²⁵ Joseph Baynes, for instance, the first stock farmer to erect a dipping tank in South Africa in the fight against cattle diseases, was the Minister of Lands and Works in George Sutton's cabinet of 1904.²⁶

Before one looks at the outbreak of East Coast Fever in Natal it is noteworthy that the colony had been susceptible to other cattle diseases since the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1855, lungsickness, a highly infectious form of pleuro-pneumonia, struck in the colony. It was followed by Redwater in 1870 whose similarities with East Coast Fever, as pointed out before, caused uncertainty and confusion in Southern Africa when East Coast Fever appeared at the beginning of the twentieth century. The third and most devastating cattle disease to appear was Rinderpest. "Rinderpest is an acute, febrile, highly contagious and fatal disease of all cloven-hoofed ruminants. It takes the form of fever, plus inflammation of membranes, followed rapidly by death".²⁷ Rinderpest broke out in an *Umuzi* near Dundee, Northern Natal on 15 July 1897.²⁸ By 1898 the disease was spreading rapidly throughout Natal and Zululand.²⁹

As the campaign against Rinderpest was to influence the reaction of the colonial authorities, farmers and homestead Africans to the outbreak of East Coast Fever, a discussion of the epizootic is useful. Since the news of the spread of Rinderpest reached Natal well before 1897, the Natal colonial authorities proactively put measures in place in order to deal with looming rinderpest devastation.³⁰ "Steps were taken to erect a quarantine fence along the Northern and North – Eastern boundaries, and eventually to seal, in the same way, the Western border with the Orange Free State. The main passes in the Drakensburg were blown up to prevent traffic with Lesotho and the movement of

25. John Lambert, "From Independence to rebellion: African society in crisis, 1880 – 1910", in Duminy and Guest, eds, *Natal and Zululand from earliest times to 1910, A new history*, p 383.

26. R O Pearse, *Joseph Baynes: Pioneer* (Pietermaritzburg, Shuter and Shooter, 1981), p 185

27. *Ibid.*, pp 80.

28. Lambert, *Betrayed trust*, p 148.

29. *Natal Blue Books Departmental reports*, 1897 – 1898.

30. Lambert, *Betrayed trust*, p 147.

animals in the colony was reduced to a minimum”.³¹ Consequently, by May 1897 the Transvaal, Orange Free State and Zululand borders had all been fenced and a number of internal fences had been erected.³² By June 1897 approximately 535 miles of fence had been erected on Natal borders at an average cost of £ 80 per mile.³³

These preventive measures were ineffective and the disease continued to spread throughout the colony. One of the main contributory factors to this state of affairs was that a considerable number of Natal’s white and African farmers were active in transport riding and their trek oxen, having been exposed to Rinderpest most certainly carried the disease across the Natal border from the already infected Transvaal, Orange Free State and Cape Colony.³⁴ With the realization that Rinderpest was already ravaging the colony’s herds, the Natal Government acted.³⁵ Bile inoculation was started. According to Dr Koch, the head of Experimental Rinderpest Station in Kimberly at that time, the best serum for inoculation should be from an animal that had died six or seven days after the onset of Rinderpest.³⁶

Hebert Watkins-Pitchford, the Natal Principal Veterinary Surgeon, was at the forefront of this campaign. Inoculation stations were set up in the colony where cattle would be purchased for bile and serum. The Colonial Government appointed inoculators for the reserves and magistrates were instructed to call chiefs and *izinduna* together to urge them to have their chiefdoms’ herds inoculated. The campaign was however not a resounding success. Cattle injected with serum were not completely immunized against Rinderpest. As time went on stocks of serum decreased. Government inoculators could not adequately cover most areas of the colony.³⁷ Thus it is likely that many African stockowners especially those living in remote areas of the colony never gained access to

31. Pearce, *Joseph Baynes*, p 82.

32. Lambert, *Betrayed trust*, p 147.

33. Ballard, “The repercussions of Rinderpest”, p 432.

34. *Ibid.*, p 437.

35. Lambert, *Betrayed trust*, p 148.

36. Natal, *Legislative Assembly, Sessional Papers*, 1897, L A No.2, 1897, p 19.

37. Lambert, *Betrayed trust*, pp 148-149.

Rinderpest serum.³⁸ Where volunteers were used Africans had to pay exorbitant fees for their services.³⁹

The failure of the colonial government in Natal and other governments in Southern Africa to contain and eradicate Rinderpest had disastrous consequences for the cattle owners. Whilst both African and white farmers experienced losses in Natal, it was the African stockowners that bore the heaviest brunt of the rinderpest epidemic. Considerable cattle losses among white farmers occurred in the coastal areas of the colony. The number of cattle decreased from 27 509 in 1896 to 13 357 in 1898. There were 197 298 cattle owned by Africans in 1896 compared with 16 761 in 1898. In the Natal midlands cattle owned by Africans declined from 167 598 in 1896 to 20 759 in 1898. With regards to the interior part of the colony, the number of cattle among Africans was reduced from 129 486 in 1896 to 38 289 in 1898.⁴⁰ In Zululand the average loss was eighty seven per cent.⁴¹ It must however be pointed out that although Zululand was annexed to the colony in 1898, statistics for cattle numbers in that Province were based entirely on estimates and cannot be relied upon. Despite this, it is estimated that by 1899 Africans in Natal and Zululand owned only 122,077 head of cattle.⁴²

The huge cattle losses resulting from the rinderpest devastation were a blow to the African homesteads. Cattle played a crucial role in the socio-economic sustenance of homesteads. Homesteads, as pointed out in the earlier chapter were units of economic and social reproduction in the African homestead society. Despite the major political changes from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, the socio-economic hierarchy, in this traditional society, remained largely intact.⁴³ The African homestead society was still a male dominated society where men (*Abanumzana*)

38. Ballard, "The repercussions of Rinderpest", p 443.

39. Lambert, *Betrayed trust*, p 149.

40. Lambert, "Africans in Natal, 1881 – 1899", Appendix 13.

41. *Natal Blue Book Departmental reports, 1898*, pp C29 – C40.

42. Natal, *Statistical Year Book*, 1899, table P.

43. Laband and Thompson, "The reduction of Zululand," pp 221.

exercised authority and power over homesteads.⁴⁴ Most significantly, men were not only responsible for the distribution of cattle within the homesteads but also used oxen to draw a plough for extensive cultivation of land. As more land was cultivated, this method of cultivation, in turn, ensured sufficient supply of maize and other grain produce such as sorghum. Women, on the other hand, had to play subservient and supportive roles such as harvesting of crops.⁴⁵ Thus the destruction of cattle by Rinderpest deprived Africans of the means to cultivate land and undermined the economic well-being of the homesteads. As a result, a growing neglect of cultivation occurred in many areas.⁴⁶ In 1898 lack of progress in agriculture and poor harvests in areas such as Impendle, Umlalazi and Mahlabathini were in part attributed to the use of the hoes instead of oxen-drawn ploughs.⁴⁷

The situation was aggravated by the lack of financial aid from the colonial authorities in Natal to enable Africans to buy other draught animals. In the aftermath of Rinderpest, the Natal colonial government imported one thousand mules and donkeys from South America in order to help farmers cultivate their land. Farmers had to pay £ 16 per head for mules and £ 8 for donkeys. These animals were inaccessible to the majority of African homesteads because of high purchasing price and non-availability of loans.⁴⁸ The lack of oxen also proved to be a stumbling block to African farmers who wanted to transport their agricultural produce to the market and to those who made their living out of wagon transport. With eighty to ninety percent of their cattle dead, many Africans who depended on transport riding for their livelihood became destitute almost overnight.⁴⁹

With the realization that Rinderpest had left many of their cattle dead, Africans began to seek employment on white farms, in the mines and towns in order to raise money to

44. Lambert, *Betrayed trust*, pp 51- 52.

45. John Laband, *Rope of Sand: The rise and fall of the Zulu Kingdom in the nineteenth century* (Johannesburg, Jonathan Ball, 1995), p 5.

46. Ballard, "The repercussions of Rinderpest", p 445.

47. *Natal Blue Book Departmental reports, 1898.*, pp C30 – C38.

48. Lambert, *Betrayed trust*, p 150.

49. Ballard, "The repercussions of Rinderpest", p 445.

augment their cattle herds. This would also help them to meet ever-increasing tax obligations. Indeed, from 1898 most divisions in the Natal Colony found it difficult to pay taxes.⁵⁰ Facing such difficulties Africans in parts of the colony pleaded with the colonial authorities for tax relief but the request was unsuccessful.⁵¹ Consequently, after 1898, there was an increase in the number of African men employed as migrant labourers in towns and mines partly to meet tax obligations. “By 1904 some 30 000 Africans excluding (labour tenants) were employed on white owned farms, 71 299 were employed as migrant labourers within the colony, and 32 878 were given passes to work outside the colony”.⁵²

Cattle were not only crucial for the tilling of the soil but they were also a source of food, namely meat and milk. In times of need or plenty, Africans slaughtered cattle to feed their families while milk the source of *Amasi* was essential in the African child’s diet. Thus the decrease in the number of cattle due to the rinderpest epizootic had dire consequences for the nutritional requirements of African children. “In 1898 district surgeons reported that cases of gastro-intestinal complaints had increased throughout the colony and infant mortality was growing in all the divisions”.⁵³ The decimation of cattle by Rinderpest among African homesteads also meant that it was no longer possible to barter a beast in exchange for grain.⁵⁴ Cattle also played a crucial role in social conventions such as *Ilobolo* and in the African belief system. In the period under consideration, a bridegroom had to pay ten cattle to his future father-in-law for his wife.⁵⁵

Given that it was a norm for African men to be polygamists it was therefore crucial that homestead heads should possess enough livestock in order to assist their sons in the payment of *Ilobolo* for their wives.⁵⁶ With Rinderpest ravaging the colony many homestead heads found it extremely difficult to fulfill this obligation because most

50. *Natal Blue Book Departmental reports*, 1898, p C40.

51. Lambert, *Betrayed trust*, p 150.

52. Lambert, “From Independence to Rebellion”, p 387.

53. Lambert, *Betrayed trust*, p 152.

54. A. S. Chigwedere, “The Rinderpest Disease and its consequences”, *Heritage* 2 1982, p 31.

55. Webb and Wright, eds, *The James Stuart Archive*, vol. 4, p 55.

56. Marguerite Poland and David Hammond-Tooke, *The abundant herds, A celebration of the cattle of the Zulu people*, (Vlaeberg, Fernwood Press, 2003), p 31.

African areas were deprived of livestock that would normally have been used as the principal medium.⁵⁷ Moreover in certain instances, parents refused to give sanction to the marriage of their daughters for fear that cattle paid for *Ilobolo* may die a day or two after marriage.⁵⁸ With regards to the African belief system, possession of cattle was crucial. When an African homestead, for instance, had been hit by death or by what seemed to be an inexplicable misfortune an ox or cow would be slaughtered to appease the ancestors and cleanse (*Ukugeza*) the family.⁵⁹

Despite the serious cattle losses that Africans had sustained as a result of Rinderpest, by 1904 magistrates were reporting that many homesteads throughout the colony were in a position where they were slowly rebuilding their herds.⁶⁰ Statistics for cattle figures the following year show that Africans in the whole colony owned approximately 506 353 head of cattle,⁶¹ a considerable increase on the 122 077 they were believed to have had in 1899 even taking into account the fact that the northern districts of the colony that were annexed in 1903 would have been included in this number. As figures for Zululand and the northern districts were not very accurate, figures for the old Natal colony, south of the Thukela River, give a more reliable indication of the increase. In 1905, Africans there were believed to own 276 997 head of cattle. Although this was far short of the 494 382 they had owned in 1896, it was a considerable improvement on the 75 809 of 1898.⁶²

According to Lambert, the recovery in cattle ownership south of Thukela had begun during the Anglo-Boer War and this should have applied to Zululand as well. During the War, Africans had been able to raise money through transport riding, by growing crops to provide food for the British troops, and by providing labour services to the army. Both

57. Ballard, "The repercussions of Rinderpest", p 448.

58. *Natal Blue Book Departmental reports*, 1897, p 55.

59. James Stuart's interview with Naidi Kamcikazi, 11 August 1904, Webb and Wright, eds, *The James Stuart Archive*, vol. 5, p 52.

60. Report on the Native Population of the Province of Zululand for the year 1904, *Natal Blue Book, Departmental reports*, 1904, p 89.

61. Lambert, "Africans in Natal", appendix 13.

62. *Ibid.*, appendix 12.

during and after the War, there were also labour opportunities on the railways and in Durban harbour.⁶³ Accordingly, East Coast Fever struck at a time when Africans seemed poised to make at least a partial recovery from the position Rinderpest had reduced them to.

In conclusion, this chapter looked at the outbreak and spread of East Coast Fever in Southern Africa before it reached Natal in 1904, and showed that the Natal colonial authorities had obtained crucial information on the disease, despite the uncertainty regarding the exact nature of the epizootic, before it attacked the colony's cattle. The Bloemfontein and Cape conferences, in particular, provided the colony with an opportunity to interact with those territories already facing the scourge of East Coast Fever. The chapter looked at the significant roles scientists and bacteriologists played in an attempt to isolate East Coast Fever from other cattle diseases. It also outlined the outbreak of Rinderpest, attempts by the Natal colonial authorities to contain and eradicate the disease, how it affected both the African and white cattle owners and its impact on the African homestead society. The campaign against Rinderpest would have given the Natal colonial officials the necessary experience in dealing with cattle diseases on a large scale. The next chapter examines the attempts by the Natal Government, less than a decade after the rinderpest devastation, to overcome the scourge of East Coast Fever.

63. Lambert, *Betrayed trust*, pp 160-161.

CHAPTER 3

AN UPHILL BATTLE

This chapter examines the steps taken by the Natal colonial government in its response to the alarming spread of East Coast Fever in the colony.¹ The principal steps were the introduction of quarantine areas, fencing regulations by which the Natal Government attempted to seal the colony's borders, the fencing of farms and reserves, and lastly the dipping of cattle. However, before expanding on these attempts by the Natal colonial authorities it is worthwhile to briefly look at how both Rhodesia and the Transvaal coped with East Coast Fever when it made its first appearance in those colonies. When East Coast Fever reached Rhodesia in 1901, there was a slow response to the lethal epizootic. This could be, as shown in chapter two, attributed to the lack of absolute certainty on the nature of East Coast Fever.

As mentioned in chapter two, by 1902 Charles Gray, the Chief Veterinary Surgeon and Joseph Orpen, the Minister of Agriculture in Rhodesia, were still uncertain about the exact nature of East Coast Fever and refused to accept that the disease was different from Rhodesian Redwater. According to Gray, the disease was only a form of Redwater and only cattle that had once been immune to Redwater but had lost their immunity were now liable to reinfection.² Orpen, accepting Gray's advice was of the view that there was no new disease "only a recrudescence of Tick Fever".³ This uncertainty regarding the nature of East Coast Fever hampered attempts to control and eradicate the spread of East Coast Fever in Rhodesia. Even Gray's suggestion that there should be cordons between Bulawayo and Salisbury was never implemented because William Robertson, one of the

1. Report by the Commissioner for Native Affairs, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1907, p 69.

2. Cranefield, *Science and Empire*, p 181.

3. *Ibid.*, p 17.

veterinary bacteriologists, who had been sent by the Chief Veterinary Surgeon of the Cape of Good Hope, Duncan Hutcheon, to offer expert advice to the colonial authorities in Rhodesia, was of the view that the step would be ineffective given that the brown tick, the carrier of virus, was then widespread in Rhodesia.⁴ However, cordons could have helped to minimize the infections although both Bulawayo and Salisbury were already under attack from East Coast Fever. This indecisiveness on the part of the veterinary experts and the colonial authorities in Rhodesia allowed the disease to spread in most parts of the colony.⁵

When East Coast Fever reached the Transvaal in 1902, the colonial authorities were more decisive than their Rhodesian counterparts in their approach to the spread of the disease. They were inclined, rightly so, to think that whether the disease was a new one or not, it should be handled as if it were a new one. To this end, Ordinance No. 17 of 1902 was proclaimed. In terms of this Ordinance the unguarded movement of cattle was prohibited and infected cattle had to be destroyed. In September 1903, the Veterinary Department urged the government to promulgate a Fencing Ordinance that would compel the fencing of infected areas. These efforts by the Transvaal Government were thwarted by resistance from farmers partly because they were not prepared to bear the costs of fencing and partly because they refused to accept that the disease was a new one which warranted serious consideration.⁶ As noted in chapter two, this position by many Transvaal farmers contributed greatly to the continued spread of East Coast Fever and the decimation of cattle.

Opposition by cattle owners in both Rhodesia and the Transvaal and misconceptions on the nature of the epizootic did not discourage scientists and government officials in the various South African colonies from seeking effective means for the eradication of East Coast Fever. The Bloemfontein and Cape conferences held in 1903 and 1904 respectively

4. *Ibid.*, p 181.

5. *Ibid.*, p 36.

6. *Ibid.*, pp 181-183.

were a case in point. Rhodesia, Cape, Natal, Transvaal, Orange River Colony, Basutoland (now Lesotho), Bechuanaland (now Botswana), Portuguese East Africa (now Mozambique), and German South West Africa (now Namibia) were represented at both conferences.⁷

A number of suggestions on how to contain and eradicate East Coast Fever were put forward at the Bloemfontein Conference. However, for the purpose of this discussion, the four key resolutions first discussed and adopted at the Bloemfontein Conference and endorsed by the Cape Conference will be outlined. After much deliberation and robust arguments, the delegates agreed upon the following measures. The fencing of farms, the prohibition of the movement of cattle in the districts threatened by infection, the destruction of infected cattle where isolated outbreaks had occurred and the quarantine of infected veld. Lastly, there was a call for more research on the methods to curb and eradicate East Coast Fever.⁸ It was crucial that more ways were explored to combat East Coast Fever since the campaign to eradicate Rinderpest particularly in Natal had not been entirely successful. In 1903 there were still reports on Rinderpest infections in some parts of the Natal Colony.⁹

Restrictions on the movement of cattle were accepted on the basis that the spread of the disease in Rhodesia had been relatively slow because the government had tried to prevent the movement of stock as much as possible.¹⁰ With regard to the destruction of the infected bovine the delegates made it quite clear that those stock owners affected by this step should receive monetary compensation from their governments. The Transvaal and Natal delegates were uncomfortable with this resolution. They argued that the measure would be difficult to implement because both black and white cattle owners had already resisted plans to have cattle suspected of having contracted the disease killed. The Natal

7. Manamela, "The History of ticks and tick-borne diseases in cattle in Natal and Zululand", p 23.

8. Natal, *Legislative Assembly, Sessional Papers*, 1904, L.A. No 7, 1904, p 77.

9. *Natal Blue Book Departmental reports*, 1903, pp 94-C24.

10. Cranefield, *Science and Empire*, p 190.

representatives, for instance, pointed out that their pessimism on the acceptance of the measure was premised on the fact that Africans would not allow their cattle to be destroyed in exchange for money because of the higher value placed on cattle than on cash. Delegates from the Cape Colony also expressed reservations on this resolution although their territory was still free of the scourge of East Coast Fever.¹¹

Indeed, as has been shown in chapter two, even despite the losses suffered as a result of Rinderpest, cattle remained central to the homestead economy, “testifying as before to the wealth and power of men of rank, and were still used in lobola payments for wives, the effective agricultural producers in the homestead”.¹² Having lost so many cattle as a result of Rinderpest there was little reason for Africans to believe that the colonial government would be able to prevent further losses from East Coast Fever. White stock-owners would, however, be equally reluctant to have infected cattle destroyed. It was clear that the governments of the Transvaal, Orange River Colony and Natal were not in a position to spend huge sums of money as compensation due to the economic repercussions of the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902.¹³ In Natal, for instance, “heavy demands were being made upon the colonial exchequer for the provision of improved agricultural services, the prevention of cattle diseases, the replenishment of railway stores and the completion of refugee repatriation”.¹⁴ For these reasons cattle killing as part of the campaign to combat East Coast Fever received little support from both farmers and officials and it never became widespread in Natal. It was only in Portuguese East Africa where large scale slaughter of cattle as part of the campaign to stamp out East Coast Fever was implemented with success.¹⁵

Scientists heeded a call for more research on East Coast Fever. As a result of research by

11. *Ibid.*, pp 191-193.

12. Laband and Thompson, “The reduction of Zululand 1878-1904”, p 221.

13. Schellnack, “The control of East Coast Fever in Natal”, p 19.

14. Andrew Duminy and Bill Guest, “The Anglo-Boer War and its economic aftermath 1889- 1902”, in Duminy and Guest, eds, *Natal and Zululand from earliest times to 1910*, p 355.

15. Diesel, “The campaign against East Coast Fever in South Africa”, p 21.

Dr Watkins-Pitchford, for example, the dipping of cattle was one of the main methods adopted in Natal in the struggle against East Coast Fever. Other colonies also implemented the method albeit with little success.¹⁶ Dr. Watkins –Pitchford had studied the life cycle of the five species of the brown tick responsible for the transmission of this epizootic and concluded that short interval dipping was one of the most effective steps in the control and destruction of the tick population and thus in the prevention of the spread of East Coast Fever.¹⁷

Looking now at the campaign against East Coast Fever in Natal, attempts to eradicate the disease, particularly after 1906, centred around the introduction of quarantine areas, fencing regulations aimed at restricting the movement of cattle, monitoring the transportation of cattle, and the dipping of cattle. These measures were aimed at both African and white owners. It would have been a futile exercise to focus mainly on one section of the population because East Coast Fever attacked cattle irrespective of the colour and economic status of the owners. Moreover, some white farmers had begun to occupy land within what had been predominantly African areas such as Zululand.¹⁸ The Natal Government also attempted to seal the colony's border through fencing in order to prevent cross- border infection. In the early stage of the East Coast Fever infection, the colonial authorities concentrated on the north eastern parts of Zululand where as shown above in chapter two, the appearance of this bovine disease was first reported.¹⁹ In the Ingwavuma Division a border fence was thus erected along the Ingwavuma-Mozambique border. After the death of a further two cattle in May 1904, the authorities decided to extend the fence along the Northern border in the Ingwavuma Division down to Bivaan River.²⁰

In addition to beginning to fence the colony's borders, the authorities also introduced a

16. Cranefield, *Science and Empire*, p 218.

17. Diesel, "The campaign against East Coast Fever in South Africa", p 22.

18. Marks, *Reluctant rebellion*, p 128.

19. Veterinary Departmental reports for February 1904, *Natal Agricultural Journal and Mining Record*, vol. VII, 1904, p 281.

20. Veterinary Departmental reports for May 1904, *Natal Agricultural Journal and Mining Record*, vol. VII, 1904, p 605.

permit system to control the movement of cattle between Natal and neighbouring colonies. People who wanted to export cattle into the Transvaal had to get permission from the District Veterinary Surgeons in both colonies. In 1908 because the situation was deteriorating, the Natal colonial authorities decided to stop granting permits for the removal of cattle, hides, horns, hooves, hair, cut grass and manure into any of the neighbouring colonies.²¹ The permit system did not only apply to inter-colonial movement of cattle but it was also to be effected within the colony. Act No. 54 of 1906 granted powers to the Minister of Agriculture to establish committees in specific areas to deal with the movement of cattle. One of the key functions of the committees was to appoint permit officers for the issue of permits required for the removal of cattle or any other purpose for which permits may be required in the colony.²²

However these provisions were not extended to any African location, or any African reserve in the Province of Zululand or any African mission reserve.²³ Nonetheless the desire by the colonial government to control the movement of cattle was a step in the right direction. Without restrictions and precautions, cattle owners could move cattle from one area to another through gates or any other exit points and unwittingly spread the disease. In addition to Act No. 54 of 1906, the Minister of Agriculture in the Colony, W.A. Deane issued Notice No. 312 of 1908. The Notice enforced prohibition of movement of cattle into or from within the infected areas in both Natal and Zululand. Any person wishing to move cattle from one area to another area had to ask permission from either an inspector, the chairman of the advisory committee or a magistrate.²⁴ This was meant to apply to both Africans and whites.

The appointment of inspectors and members of the advisory committees was, however, carried out in predominantly white areas. No advisory committees or boards were

21. Natal, Department of Agriculture, *East Coast Fever Acts, Regulations and Orders in force*, (Pietermaritzburg, October 1908), p 16.

22. *Ibid.*, p 13.

23. *Ibid.*

24. *Ibid.*, p16.

appointed in all major districts of Zululand, namely Ubombo, Ingwavuma, Mahlabathini, Ndwandwe, (Nongoma) Nkandhla and Hlabisa owing to the sparse white population.²⁵ Instead magistrates were asked to try and co-operate with chiefs and headmen with the object of inducing them to select men who might work with the magistrate or an officer of his Department.²⁶ It would have been sensible for the Department of Agriculture to get in touch with African cattle owners like their white counterparts through advisory committees or any body constituted by stock owners and let magistrates continue with their administrative duties. In the period under consideration, there was evidence of maladministration in the reserves. Maurice Evans, the Under Secretary for Native Affairs in 1908, blamed the situation *inter alia* on the appointment of inexperienced magistrates for large districts that they found difficult to administer.²⁷ Communication between African chiefs, particularly in the reserves, and government officials was almost non-existent, Africans were denied access to the governor and it was rare to interact with the officials of the Department of Native Affairs.²⁸

As a result, information on the campaign against East Coast Fever was not properly and fully communicated to Africans in many areas and this led to misunderstandings and hardships for homestead communities. In 1907, for example, the magistrate for Vryheid Division complained to the Department of Native Affairs that distant officials subjected Africans to arbitrary and ruthless measures. The hardships prompted the magistrate to suggest that the area should be divided into a dozen Native commissionerships in order to bring about effectiveness in the campaign and minimize difficulties encountered by Africans in the course of the campaign.²⁹

In view of the above developments it is clear that inadequate care was taken to prevent the spread of East Coast Fever in homestead communities and that regulations on

25. *Natal Agricultural Journal* vol. XII, January-June, 1909, p 794.

26. Secretary for Native Affairs (SNA) [National Archives, Natal Depot], 1087/ 1908, *Circular S. N.A.* No. 13, 1908.

27. Maurice Evans, *The Native problem in Natal* (Durban, P. Davis and Sons, 1906), p 16.

28. Lambert, *Betrayed trust*, p 186.

29. SNA, NA, Papers Nos: 751-920, 1907, U.S.N.A. 13/13/07 *Extract from Blue Book*, Report by Magistrate, Vryheid Division.

the movement of cattle were not enforced. The transmission of East Coast Fever from Nquthu to Inkandhla was another example of acts of omission on the part of colonial state. According to the report of the Department of Native Affairs for the year 1907, the disease was introduced by oxen transporting mealies from Nquthu.³⁰ This could have been prevented if inspectors had been appointed.

Turning now to quarantine areas. It should be stressed that quarantine regulations in Natal were not carried out exactly as recommended at both the Bloemfontein and Cape conferences. Resolution three linked quarantine zones with the destruction of infected cattle and provided for stockowners to be compensated financially.³¹ As noted before, there was no massive slaughter of infected herds in the colony. There were isolated cases of cattle killing in Zululand as part of the campaign to stamp out East Coast Fever.³² In the main quarantine regulations were aimed at isolating infected cattle from healthy stock.

The first magisterial districts to be included in a quarantine zone were Vryheid, Paulpietersburg and Utrecht on the Transvaal border.³³ Other districts affected by the spread of East Coast Fever in the north east of Zululand later came under quarantine regulations, notably Ingwavuma and Mahlabathini divisions. In June 1906 the Principal Veterinary Surgeon reported that at Ingwavuma all the cattle had been removed from the infected veld by May 1905 and no other cases occurred there.³⁴ In Mahlabathini not only were areas quarantined but kraals with suspected cattle were strictly isolated.³⁵ However Africans complained that infected cattle were quarantined with healthy animals

30., Magisterial Report, Nkandhla Division, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1907, p 72.

31. *Natal Government Gazette*, VOL. LVI, February 16, 1904, pp 214-215.

32. Report of the Principal Veterinary Surgeon for the year ended 30 June 1906, *Natal Departmental reports*, 1906, p 13.

33. *Natal Government Gazette*, VOL. LVI, February 16, 1904 pp 214-215.

34. Report of The Principal Veterinary Surgeon for the year ended 30 June 1906, *Natal Departmental reports*, 1906, p 13.

35. Veterinary Departmental Reports for May 1904, *Natal Agricultural Journal and Mining Record*, vol. VII. p 605.

thus defeating the purpose of quarantine regulations and this led to the death of many cattle in the division.³⁶

This state of affairs was attributed to non-consultation by the colonial officials with African cattle owners and a growing gap between Africans and government officials in general, and in some cases between government officials themselves.³⁷ Lack of consultation, for instance, between the magistrates of Ngotshe and Vryheid divisions and the Principal Veterinary Surgeon resulted in a clash. This was after the Magistrate of Vryheid had complained about the difficulties caused by the quarantine restrictions among Africans due to the conduct of the Veterinary Departmental officers. Complaints by Africans in Vryheid were almost the same as those in Mahlabathini namely that healthy cattle were quarantined with infected animals. In the process Africans lost their livestock due to starvation and infection.³⁸ Instead of reprimanding his subordinates, the Principal Veterinary Surgeon accused the Magistrate of making sweeping accusations. Interestingly enough, the Principal Veterinary Surgeon did admit that Africans did not, in some cases, understand the methods adopted to save cattle.³⁹ Arguably, it was the responsibility of his officers to explain to Africans why certain measures were implemented as part of the campaign against East Coast Fever.

Undoubtedly, such defects in the colonial administration which appear to have been widespread in Zululand did little to strengthen the campaign against the ravages of East Coast Fever. In addition, the conduct of the colonial officials led to mistrust and fear among Africans that cattle, the backbone of their survival were in great danger of being wiped out due to arbitrary actions by the colonial officials. The lack of proper channels of

36. Natal, *Native Affairs Commission, 1906-7, Evidence*, p 879.

37. Marks, *Reluctant rebellion*, p 139.

38. SNA, NA, Papers Nos: 751-920, 1907, *Minute Paper*, Animal Diseases, Extract from Annual Reports, Vryheid Division, 9 April 1907, pp 1-5.

39. *Ibid.*

communication between Africans and government officials in the colony was one of the main grievances raised by Africans before the Native Affairs Commission of 1906-7.

More than ten divisions raised the issue of miscommunication with the Commissioners. The chiefs, in particular, bitterly complained about their powers being undermined by both the white officials and farmers and about lack of communication on matters affecting their subjects. East Coast Fever regulations were a cause of great concern.⁴⁰ The failure of the government to communicate properly with Africans made it likely that the latter would be less willing to co-operate with officials whose arbitrary actions, in most cases, did not inspire them with confidence and hope. Certainly, this undermined the campaign against East Coast Fever and helped contribute to the spread of the disease in African areas.

It is noteworthy that this failure of the government came at a time when tension between the Africans and the colonial government was being exacerbated by the growing financial demands of the government. The introduction of a poll tax, in 1905, for all unmarried young men in the colony was a case in point.⁴¹ Males eligible for this tax had to pay £ 1.⁴² Although all single men were required to pay the tax, it fell heavily on Africans. Before the promulgation of the poll tax, unmarried young men assisted their fathers in the payment of hut tax. This brought relief to homesteads heads, given that they were responsible for the payment of hut tax on all huts in their homesteads including those of bachelors, unmarried girls and widows.⁴³ In addition to hut tax and poll tax, the majority of Africans had to pay dog tax, pass fees, fines and fees of the court and identification pass renewals.⁴⁴ This placed Africans in many parts of the colony in a precarious

40. Natal, *Native Affairs Commission 1906-7, Evidence*, pp 697, 705, 879, 882.

41. Marks, *Reluctant rebellion*, p 141.

42. Lambert, *Betrayed trust*, p 1.

43. Marks, *Reluctant rebellion*, p 141.

44. Report on the Native Population of the Province of Zululand by the Commissioner for Native Affairs for the year 1906, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1906, p 13.

financial situation at a time when they had begun rebuilding their herds and fuelled anger and despair.

Indeed, when the poll tax was introduced disapproval was recorded in more than half of the divisions in the colony. In most divisions there were fears among homestead heads that the poll tax would greatly hamper their ability to pay other taxes particularly hut tax because they would not get financial assistance from young men.⁴⁵ In divisions such as New Hanover, Dundee and Eshowe homesteads openly declared that there was no money to pay the poll tax because their sons contributed to the payment of other taxes and rents.⁴⁶ These fears and defiant statements were an indication of growing resentment on the part of Africans and distrust between Africans and the colonial state. A situation that was not likely to make Africans trust government attempts to prevent East Coast Fever from spreading. It has been shown that the introduction of the poll tax was an important cause of the Bhambatha rebellion of 1906.⁴⁷ For the purpose of this dissertation, the rebellion should be seen in the context of general mistrust and unease as cattle disease once again threatened the homestead society at its core.

While the brutal crushing of the Bhambatha rebellion destroyed any remaining confidence that Africans might have had in the colonial officials, its major significance for this dissertation is that it accelerated the spread of East Coast Fever and the destruction of cattle in homestead communities. The spread of the rebellion in most parts of the colony led to the uncontrolled movement of cattle by both Africans and whites. In most cases cattle owners moved their stock in order to protect them from either rebels or colonial troops and in the process then unwittingly spread the disease. In Vryheid Division, some people fearing the worst from the rebellion, moved into town lands with their cattle from outlying areas, and in doing so spread the disease in areas that had

45. Magisterial Reports, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1905, pp 11-19.

46. *Ibid.*

47. See for example Lambert, *Betrayed trust*, and Marks, *Reluctant rebellion*, pp 189 and 148 respectively.

previously been cleared.⁴⁸ Moreover, the uncontrolled use of ox-transport by both the Natal military and Africans aggravated the situation.⁴⁹ This undermined attempts by the colonial officials to enforce restrictions on the movement of cattle.

Furthermore, the brutal suppression of the rebellion did little to decrease anger and despair among Africans. In Mapumulo Division, for instance, cattle of the suspected rebels were confiscated as a measure to suppress the rebellion while in Nkandhla Division a large number of homesteads were destroyed thus depriving Africans of livestock.⁵⁰ On the whole the seizure of cattle was justified on the grounds that homestead heads were responsible for the actions of all the members of the homesteads.⁵¹ These indiscriminate actions by the colonial troops convinced Africans that the government was determined to destroy their independence. Apart from human suffering and the loss of cattle the uprisings eventually cost the colony £ 884,598 192.⁵² These funds could have been better used for combating East Coast Fever than in action against a people whose lives were crumbling due to the loss of cattle, their most valued possession.⁵³

The conduct of the government officials in the course of the campaign should not be construed as a deliberate attempt by the colonial authorities to allow the decimation of homestead cattle. Certainly, they were quite aware that should they fail to contain the spread and destruction of East Coast Fever white farmers would also lose their cattle due to their proximity to African reserves. This maladministration was evident at central

48. Edgar Brookes and Colin de B. Webb, *A history of Natal* (Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 1987), p 125.

49. Magisterial Report, Weenen Division, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1907, p 30.

50. Magisterial Report, Nkandhla Division, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1907, p 72.

51. John Lambert, "The rise of indebtedness in Natal during the late colonial period", *Kleio*, XXIV, 1992, pp 22-23.

52. Natal, Auditor-General's Report on the Public accounts for the year ended June 30, 1908, *Natal Parliamentary Papers*, Legislative Council, VOL. 768, 1909, p f 40.

53. Report on the Native Population of the Province of Zululand for the Year 1905, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1905, p 108.

government level as well and was symptomatic of the great gulf that had opened between the government and Africans.

Despite the shortcomings in the Native Administration and the problems caused by the Bhambatha rebellion, quarantine regulations were extended to the southern and western areas of the colony by 1908. Undoubtedly, this was after it had become clear that East Coast Fever could not be confined to Zululand and the Transvaal border areas. In the Natal Midlands, the Government Notice No.342 of 1908 proclaimed the Thukela River from its source to the point where that river joined the mainline of railway to be a fixed quarantine boundary. This measure affected areas such as Weenen and Ladysmith. The removal of cattle from one side of the river to the other was disallowed. Secondly, the Richmond Railway line in the Camperdown Magisterial District (South of Pietermaritzburg) from the point where the railway line crossed the western boundary of Lillifontein farm became a fixed quarantine boundary in terms of Notice 507.⁵⁴ These quarantine regulations did not cause many disruptions in the white communities. White farms had either fences around their farms or clearly defined boundaries. If there was a need for cattle to be quarantined in certain farms only the owners of those farms would be affected by this method or bear the responsibility.⁵⁵ Unlike in African areas where the whole homestead community could be in danger due to the sharing of grazing land.⁵⁶

In line with restrictions on the movement of cattle, the fencing of farms and districts was carried out in the colony. Fencing regulations were implemented in accordance with the Fencing Law of 1887 in what became known as the East Coast Fever Fencing Act No. 6 of 1907 or the Compulsory Fencing Act of 1907 after it had been amended. The Compulsory Act of 1907 made provision for compulsory fencing to be erected “along boundaries of any farms within an infected or suspected area or of any town lands within such an area”.⁵⁷ Although the Act did not specifically refer to the fencing of the reserves

54. Natal, Department of Agriculture, *East Coast Fever. Acts Regulations and Orders in force*, 1908, pp 19-23.

55. *Ibid.*, p 4.

56. Marks, *Reluctant rebellion*, p 139.

57. Natal, Department of Agriculture, *East Coast Fever Acts, Regulations and Orders in Force*, 1908, p 7.

where the majority of Africans lived, it would seem reserves would fall under suspected or infected areas. This suggests that the colonial authorities would adopt a reactive approach regarding the fencing of the reserves. Arguably, the decision to fence farms and divisions and not reserves indicated that the priority of government was to protect cattle on white owned lands.

Notwithstanding the bias towards white stockowners, the fencing campaign was a crucial step in the fight against East Coast Fever. Certainly, without fences cattle infested with ticks carrying the disease could easily spread it to healthy animals particularly by grazing amongst them. This situation could be exacerbated in homestead communities where cattle were frequently moved from one homestead area to another in search of greener pastures.⁵⁸ Probably with this in mind as early as 1904, and with the increase in the number of fatal cases in Ingwavuma, the colonial government had decided to erect a fence from Kosi Bay to the junction of the Usuthu and Phongolo rivers and along the south and eastern bank of the Phongola river to the Lebombo mountains. According to S.B. Woollatt, the Principal Veterinary Surgeon, the step ideally would be to completely isolate the rest of the colony from the infected areas of Ingwavuma.⁵⁹

By 1907 divisions such as Newcastle and Weenen, in the Natal Midlands, Ndwedwe, Inanda and Umgeni in the south of the colony as well as Pietermaritzburg, areas had been included in the fencing campaign.⁶⁰ While the fencing of districts or divisions was the financial responsibility of the colonial authorities, both white and African farmers had to bear the costs of fencing their land in terms of section 3 of Act 54, 1906.⁶¹ However the Natal colonial government granted loans to landowners including African landowners. Loans granted to farmers had to repaid through installments within a period of thirteen

58. *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 14 February 1908.

59. Veterinary Departmental Reports for June 1904, *Natal Agricultural Journal and Mining record*, vol. VII, p 706.

60. *Natal Agricultural Journal and Mining Record*, vol. X, 1907, p 549.

61. *Times of Natal*, 14 August 1908.

months with interest.⁶² In 1908 the government set aside £48,000 for fencing and other preventive measures, and in 1909 £ 10,000 was made available as a loan scheme to farmers specifically for fencing purposes.⁶³

However, it would seem that the scheme was meant for large-scale white farmers. Those Africans who benefited would have been Christian (*amakholwa*) landowners but most African farmers were small-scale farmers who were not accommodated because “they did not have capital, resources or access to credit facilities that would enable them to recoup their losses and could not afford the cost of fencing as required by the legislation of a government that was largely controlled by successful white farmers”.⁶⁴ Certainly, African homesteads were not in a position where they could benefit. This was another indication that the government’s main concern was to protect cattle in white- owned farms. Even Stephen Mini one of the prominent African land-owners in Edendale, Pietermaritzburg had his application for a loan of an amount of £ 65, turned down in April 1908. The Assistant Under Secretary for Native Affairs cited the shortage of funds as the reason for not granting Mini a loan.⁶⁵ Yet members of Parliament were informed that there had been some savings in the supply Act of 1907–8 that would possibly enable the government to grant agricultural loans to more people.⁶⁶

Fencing in homestead communities was not as successful as it was in white commercial farming.⁶⁷ It should, however, be pointed out that tenant homestead communities on white farms would have received protection when the farms were fenced. By contrast, fences surrounding the reserves were inadequate to curb the spread of East Coast Fever. This was mainly due to communal grazing. Homestead herds still grazed over large tracts

62. Natal, Department of Agriculture, *East Coast Fever Acts, Regulations and orders in Force*, October 1908, p 7.

63. Natal, *Legislative Assembly, Sessional Papers*, 1909-1910, Fifth session, Fifth parliament, L.A. No. 4, 1909, p 22.

64. Guest “The New Economy”, p 317.

65 S N A, NA Papers, Nos: 1005-1159, 1908, S.N.A. 1092 / 08, *Minute Paper*, 23 April 1908.

66. Natal, *legislative Assembly, Sessional Papers*, 1908, Third Session, Fifth Parliament, L. A. No 1, 1908, p 3.

67. Natal, *Legislative Assembly, Sessional Papers*, 1909-1910, L. A. No. 7, 30 November 1909, p 41.

of land.⁶⁸ Clearly, even one infected bull or cow could spread East Coast Fever through the herds much faster than was the case with the white-owned cattle that were separated into smaller herds on individual farms, most of which were fenced.⁶⁹ Thus the emphasis on fencing the divisions and farms mainly owned by whites seems to suggest that the government policy ignored the vulnerability of the homestead. The situation could have been ameliorated had the government officials attempted to involve chiefs and *Izinduna* in order to identify boundaries in communal areas where fences could be erected for the prevention of the spread of East Coast Fever.

Lastly, although the dipping of cattle was not one of the principal resolutions taken at the conferences in Bloemfontein and Cape Town, it became widespread in Natal. The logic behind dipping, it can be reckoned, was that the destruction of ticks was central to the drastic reduction of infection given that the disease was transmitted solely by ticks.⁷⁰ The dipping of cattle was carried out in terms of section 3 of Act 54 of 1906 by which the magistrate of any division should, upon receiving a requisition signed by no fewer than fifteen persons owning cattle within the division, call a meeting of cattle owners of the division to consider the question of enforcing the dipping or the cleansing of cattle.⁷¹

The dipping of cattle however played little or no part in the large-scale prevention of East Coast Fever until Dr Herbert Watkins-Pitchford, the Director of the Veterinary Department in the Natal Colony showed the benefit of short-interval dipping from 1908 onwards. He advocated short-interval dipping for three days, bi-weekly and five days for the control and eradication of the disease.⁷² Having tested certain dipping fluids, Watkins-Pitchford proved that by using arsenate of soda the safety of animals could not be compromised.⁷³ For dipping to be carried out in both African and white areas, dipping

68. Lambert, *Betrayed trust*, p 111.

69. Manamela, "The History of ticks and tick borne diseases in Natal and Zululand", p 24.

70. S.B. Woollatt, Natal, Department of Agriculture, Blue Book Bulletin XI, *East Coast Fever*, 1906, p 6.

71. Natal, Department of Agriculture, *East Coast Fever, Acts Regulations and Orders in Force*, 1908, p 12.

72. Diesel, "The campaign against East Coast Fever in South Africa", pp 21-22.

73. Manamela, "The History of ticks and tick-borne diseases in Natal And Zululand", p 25.

tanks had to be built in areas where they did not exist. In the early years of East Coast Fever infection, 1904 – 1905 white farmers were given the responsibility by the colonial authorities to construct dipping tanks for themselves and for public use. Wealthy farmers such as Joseph Baynes of Nelsrust Estate constructed dipping tanks on their own farms or estates for public use as well.⁷⁴ Baynes was one of the first farmers in the sub-continent to implement systematic cattle dipping as an effective method against East Coast Fever.⁷⁵ Farmers with insufficient capital were granted a sum of £ 2000 as a loan to erect dipping tanks.⁷⁶

As East Coast Fever ravaged most parts of the colony the government, in 1908, announced that it would build tanks at public expense in any part of the colony for the dipping of cattle or other animals and may take such charges for dipping and recover money spent from the owners of cattle or other animals dipped.⁷⁷ In 1909 the Natal Native Trust, the body tasked to administer lands that were occupied and used by Africans, was given the responsibility to erect and maintain dipping tanks in any Native location or mission reserve for compulsory dipping.⁷⁸ Dipping, like other measures adopted by the Natal Government to contain and eradicate East Coast Fever caused a rift between Africans in the reserves and the colonial authorities. Manamela reckons that many Africans believed that the dipping of cattle was a ploy of the colonial government to decrease their cattle in order to absorb Africans into wage labour. Accordingly, their experience of losing large herds during the rinderpest pandemic while their white counterparts only lost relatively few herds, made them believe that East Coast Fever was introduced by whites to make them subservient to white rule.⁷⁹

Indeed, the campaign against Rinderpest had been characterized by accusations and

74. Natal, *Legislative Assembly, Sessional Papers*, 1909-1910, L.A, no. 7, Fifth Session, Fifth Parliament, 1909, p 38.

75. Guest, "The new economy", p 318.

76. Diesel, "The campaign against East Coast Fever in South Africa", p 21.

77. Natal, Department of Agriculture, *East Coast Fever, Acts, Regulations and Orders in Force* 1908, p 3.

78. Natal, *Debates of the Legislative Council of the Colony of Natal*, Fourth session, Fifth Parliament, 30 March 1909, p 206.

79. Manamela, "The History of ticks and tick-borne diseases in Natal and Zululand", p 27.

counter accusations from both Africans and whites that had hampered efforts to stamp out Rinderpest and had eventually strained relations between Africans and white cattle owners in the colony.⁸⁰ Even once dipping tanks had been introduced to try to prevent the spread of East Coast Fever, there were officials in the Veterinary Department who believed that the congregation of herds at the tanks would cause the spread of the infection which would outweigh the benefits of dipping. Compared to white areas, few dipping tanks were built in predominantly African areas.⁸¹ Certainly, the construction of more dipping tanks would have helped minimize infection through contact. However, there were very few dipping tanks in Zululand areas in the period under consideration.⁸² In view of the above discussion it would seem that the failure of the officials in the Native Affairs and Veterinary departments to act decisively aggravated the spread of East Coast Fever in the reserves.

To recap this discussion, when the Natal colonial authorities realized that East Coast Fever was most likely to reach the colony, they had interacted with the other colonies to explore ways of dealing with the imminent problem. Their presence at both Bloemfontein and Cape conferences was crucial because they gained valuable information on the campaign against the disease. Most of the measures that were discussed and adopted in the conferences were implemented in Natal. The campaign to eradicate East Coast Fever in the colony was, however, not without shortcomings. There was no proper communication between the government officials and African cattle owners. Measures to fight the disease were, in many instances, not properly explained to Africans. The quarantine regulations were a case in point. This state of affairs was, in part, a product of a paternalistic mentality among the colonial officials.⁸³ It was largely due to this mentality that the colonial officials, in most cases, took arbitrary actions during the

80. Lambert, *Betrayed trust*, pp 150 – 151.

81. Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1909, p ix.

82. *Natal Statistical Year Book*, Part VI – Land settlement, irrigation – Agriculture and livestock, 1909, p 90.

83. Natal, *Report of Native Affairs Commission 1906-7*, p 12.

campaign against East Coast Fever. This resulted in further alienation of Africans from the colonial state, and growing tension and bewilderment in the homestead society. The negative reaction to the imposition of the poll tax by many Africans and the Bhambatha rebellion were a manifestation of polarization in the Natal Colony that undermined the fight against the disease. Eventually, it was Africans who bore the heaviest brunt of East Coast Fever. By 1909 the epizootic had got a firm hold on nearly all the locations and African cattle had in many parts been entirely swept away thus removing the means for the extensive cultivation of land amongst communal communities.⁸⁴ The loss of cattle was a big blow to the homestead society. The next chapter thus attempts to show how the destruction of cattle accelerated rural decline in Natal.

84. Report by the secretary for Native Affairs for Year 1909, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1909, p ix.

CHAPTER 4

A HOPELESS SITUATION

This chapter looks at the impact of East Coast Fever on food production in the African homesteads, the social practices associated with African culture, the rise of indebtedness and the mechanisms Africans used to ameliorate their worsening situation from 1905 to 1909. The previous chapter dealt with the campaign against East Coast Fever and how the colonial authorities and the veterinarians in the Natal Colony failed to successfully contain and completely eradicate the disease. By 1910, for instance, outbreaks were still being reported in the Natal Midlands and the south of the colony.¹ These outbreaks, as from 1904, led to huge cattle losses throughout the colony especially among Africans both north and south of the Thukela River. However, before one looks at how cattle losses hampered land cultivation in the African homesteads and disrupted their social life, it is crucial to outline the actual losses of livestock from 1904 to 1909 since the thrust of this dissertation is to show how the destruction of cattle brought hardships and despair in the rural communities.

The impact was at first minimal. In Zululand, where East Coast Fever appeared in 1904, only three divisions out of eleven reported having lost cattle in the 1904-1905 period. In the previous chapters the death of fourteen cattle in Ingwavuma division was in 1904 alluded to.² Mahlabathini and Ndwedwe divisions, on the other hand, lost a considerable number of cattle that year because not only had cattle succumbed to the disease but a large number were destroyed as part of the campaign to stamp out the disease. According to the Report by the Civil Commissioner those Africans whose cattle had been killed were being compensated by the colonial authorities.³ This was, no doubt, done to

1. *Natal Agricultural Journal*, vol. XV, no. 2 and no. 6, 1910, p 754.

2. Veterinary departmental reports for February 1904, *Natal Agricultural Journal and Mining Record* vol. VII, 1904, p 281.

3. Report on the Native Population of the Province of Zululand for the Year 1904, *Natal Blue book Departmental report*, 1904, p 89.

minimize the disruptions and anger among the Africans since cattle were central to both the economic and the social well being of the African homestead.

The next part of the colony to experience the onslaught of East Coast Fever was Northern Natal in 1905. Out of thirteen divisions, two were reported to have lost cattle namely, Paulpietersburg and Ngotshe. Forty-five cattle died in Paulpietersburg during September and October 1905.⁴ In Ngotshe Division Africans suffered a double blow. East Coast Fever not only killed cattle but many cattle were taken from their owners by the colonial officials and moved to new grazing land as one of the measures to combat East Coast Fever.⁵ There were no reports on cattle losses in the Natal Midlands and the coastal areas of the colony in the 1904 - 1905 period. Cattle losses in Zululand and Northern Natal did not have an impact on the overall number of cattle in the colony. The number of cattle actually increased from 664,874, in 1904, to 783,887 in 1905. Africans owned 506,353 cattle in 1905 compared with 343,159 in 1904.⁶

Only three divisions in the whole colony recorded cattle losses in 1906 due to East Coast Fever. Those were Mahlabathini and Ndwandwe divisions in Zululand and Mapumulo Division near the coast. In Mahlabathini, cattle losses occurred among Dinuzulu's people while the Mandlakazi chiefdom suffered in Ndwandwe Division.⁷ Dinuzulu was the son of Cetshwayo, the last king of the Zulu kingdom.⁸ He was the chief of the Usuthu faction of the Zulu Royal house. During the 1906 uprisings later known as the Bambatha Rebellion, he became the rallying point particularly for those Africans fighting against the colonial forces. The visit by Bhambatha Zondi, for example, the leader in the uprisings, in his Royal kraal in Zululand, may have convinced Africans of his support. For this reason, amongst others, Dinuzulu was accused of instigating the uprisings. He

4. Veterinary Departmental Reports for September and October 1905, *Natal Agricultural Journal and Mining Record*, vol. VIII, 1905, pp 1031, 1153.

5. Magisterial Report: Ngotshe Division, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1905, p 83.

6. *Natal Statistical Year Book*, 1908, p 6.

7. Report on the Native Population of the Province of Zululand by the Commissioner for Native Affairs for the Year 1906, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1906, p 14.

8. Laband and Thompson, "The reduction of Zululand", p 212.

was later arrested. After a lengthy trial, Dinuzulu was sentenced to four years imprisonment. This marked the end of his authority.⁹ The circumstances surrounding the incarceration of Dinuzulu were a testimony to the growing rift between Africans and the colonial state.¹⁰ It was pointed out in chapter three that this state of affairs undermined the campaign against East Coast fever.

The absence of reports on the number of dead cattle in many parts of the colony can be attributed to a lack of information about what was happening in African areas in the colony as a result of the disturbances caused by the Bhambatha Rebellion of 1906.¹¹ The extent to which the rebellion hastened the spread and destruction of East Coast Fever was discussed in chapter three and it is most likely that losses would have been widespread during 1906.

Cattle fatalities increased in the majority of divisions in the colony from 1907 to 1909. In January 1909, according to *Ilanga laze Natal, the IsiZulu* medium newspaper edited by the mission educated John Langalibalele Dube, the colony was being shorn of its cattle.¹² In 1907 only three divisions in Zululand were reported to have no cattle losses: Ingwavuma, Lower Umfolozi and Emtongweni.¹³ One of the hardest hit areas was Ndwandwe Division where cattle were practically wiped out by the spread and destruction of East Coast Fever.¹⁴ In providing evidence before the Native Affairs Commission in 1907, Mpikanina, one of the chiefs in Ndwandwe Division, stated that people were at a loss to know how they were going to live as the fever had caused great trouble by destroying their livestock.¹⁵

The northern and the western parts of the colony did not escape the devastation in 1907.

9. Lambert, "African society in crisis", pp 393-396.

10. Marks, *Reluctant rebellion*, pp 257-261.

11. Magisterial Report: Ndwandwe Division, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1907, p 82.

12. *Ilanga Lase-Natal*, 1 January 1909.

13. Magisterial Reports, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1907, pp 35- 64.

14. *Ibid.*, p 19.

15. Natal, *Native Affairs Commission 1906-7, Evidence*, p 881.

According to the Annual Report of the Native Affairs Department, Newcastle was the only division that was free from East Coast Fever in the northern part of the Natal Colony. In Klip River Division one African was able to save only four cattle out of ninety-two.¹⁶

The western parts of the colony such as Impendhle, Ipoleta and Underberg were however said to be free of the ravages of the East Coast Fever in 1907. There were few cases of East Coast Fever reported in the Natal Midlands. Fatalities were recorded only in Weenen, Kranskop and Umvoti Divisions.¹⁷ Most of the coastal areas of the colony experienced considerable cattle losses. According to the Annual Reports for the year 1907, one of the most devastated divisions in the coastal areas was Mapumulo where cattle were scarcely to be seen.¹⁸ As a consequence of this there was an overall decline in the number of the cattle in the Natal Colony. Cattle belonging to both Africans and Europeans decreased from 783, 887 in 1905 to 416, 527 in 1907, and cattle owned by Africans declined from 506, 353 in 1905 to 186, 213 in 1907. Cattle belonging to white farmers decreased from 273,376 to 227,348.¹⁹ In terms of percentages, Africans lost about sixty three percent of their cattle between 1905 and 1907 compared with just under seventeen percent loss among white stockowners.

In the 1908–1909 period the situation got worse. In 1908 not a single division in Zululand was immune from the ravages of East Coast Fever. Almost all the divisions lost many cattle and some, such as Eshowe, Nkandhla, Lower Umfolozi and Nquthu lost more than half of their livestock. There was utter devastation in Mtunzini, Hlabisa, Mahlabathini, Ndwandwe and Emtanjaneni. In Mtunzini Division, for example, four wards reportedly had their herds completely wiped out. Ninety-five percent of cattle perished in Ndwandwe Division. That a beast could only be found here and there in Mahlabathini

16. Magisterial Report: Klip River Division, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1907, p 19.

17. *Ibid.*, pp 28- 33.

18. *Ibid.*, p 18.

19. *Natal Statistical Yearbooks*, 1905–1907.

was another testimony to the destitution caused by East Coast Fever.²⁰ The extent of the devastation was such that by 1909 very few areas in Zululand remained through which East Coast Fever had not swept with dire consequences. According to the District Native Commissioner for Zululand, it would be a matter of time before herds were completely decimated.²¹

The situation was no better in the rest of the colony. Out of twenty-six divisions, in 1908, only six divisions were free of East Coast Fever: Alfred, Ixopo, Richmond, Impendhle, Ipoela and Escourt. The most devastated divisions included Umsinga, Ngotshe, Mapumulo, Krantzkop, Lower Tugela and Inanda. Seven percent of cattle remained in Umsinga Division, and only five percent in Inanda.²² The destruction continued in 1909. African homesteads in Krantzkop, Mapumulo, Lower Tugela, Inanda, New Hanover and Lions River divisions possessed very few herds. Empty kraals in Inanda Division bore testimony to the decimation of cattle by East Coast Fever.²³ In the south of the colony divisions such as Umlazi and Umgeni bore the heaviest brunt of the epizootic. According to the Native Affairs Departmental Report for 1909, herds of cattle were no longer to be found in Umlazi and Umnini reserves.²⁴

White farmers were also affected by the ravages of East Coast Fever.²⁵ Cases were another testimony to the destitution caused by East Coast Fever.²⁰ The reported on farms in the Natal Midlands and coastal areas especially in 1909.²⁶ Indeed there was a decline in the number of cattle owned by the white farmers in the period under consideration. In 1904 white farmers possessed 317, 692 cattle. The number decreased to 210,412

20. Report on the Native Population of the Province of Zululand, by the Commissioner for the Native Affairs, for the year 1908, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1908, p 35.

21. Report by District Native Commissioner of Districts no. 4, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1909, p1xxiii.

22. Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1908, pp19-22.

23. Report by District Native Commissioner of District no. 2, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1909, pp 1vii –1 viii.

24. Report by District Native Commissioner of District no. 1, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1909, p xliii.

25. Natal, *Legislative Assembly, Sessional Papers*, 1909-1910, L. A. No. 4, 1909, p 21.

26. *Natal Agricultural Journal* vol. XII, January – June 1909, p 714.

in 1909.²⁷ Due to lack of statistical information from the official records, it is unclear whether or not cattle losses slacked off in 1910.

In view of the extent to which Africans lost their livestock, there can be no doubt that East Coast Fever greatly threatened the survival of the African homesteads and contributed to their continuing decline.²⁸ To start with, the disastrous loss of cattle in homesteads disrupted food production in homestead communities. By the beginning of twentieth century, most homesteads were already finding it hard to feed themselves due to Rinderpest and to the natural disasters that greatly affected African subsistence communities from the late 1880s.²⁹ Owing to frequent droughts and ravages of locusts many areas in Zululand experienced crop failures in 1904.³⁰ East Coast Fever therefore inflicted losses on a people who were already finding it difficult making ends meet.

Because of the loss of draught animals from 1904 many Africans could no longer undertake large-scale cultivation of the soil using a plough. This method of cultivation enabled African homesteads to produce adequate grain and other agricultural produce such as pumpkins. Under this circumstance, homesteads were forced to revert to the use of the hoes in the cultivation of land.

In 1905 the use of the hoes was prevalent in Paulpietersburg and Ngotshe divisions.³¹ As the situation deteriorated, more homesteads resorted to hoeing. The widespread use of the hoes was reported in divisions such as Umvoti, Ngotshe and Hlabisa.³² In fact by 1908 the use of hoes in the cultivation of land was prevalent in both Zululand and Natal areas. Ubombo, Hlabisa, Mtunzini, Mahlabathini, Emtongjaneni, Nkandhla and Eshowe were the affected divisions in Zululand.³³ In the Natal areas there was widespread use of the hoes

27. *Natal Statistical Year Book*, 1909, p E1.

28. Laband and Thompson, "The reduction of Zululand 1878 – 1904", p 223.

29. *Natal Blue Book on Native Affairs 1898*, pp B 65 –C 40.

30. Report on the Native Population of Province of Zululand for the Year 1904, *Natal Blue Book on Native Affairs 1904*, p 90.

31. Magisterial Reports, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1905, pp 77-83.

32. Magisterial Reports, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1907, pp 31, 66, 78.

33. Report on the Native Population of the Province of Zululand, by the Commissioner for Native Affairs for the Year 1908, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1908, p 34.

in Newcastle, Dundee, Lions River, Umvoti, Inanda, and Lower Tugela divisions.³⁴ In 1909 all four District Native Commissioners reported on the use of the hoes in certain divisions. In District number three, for instance, that comprised Vryheid, Utrecht, Dundee, Ngotshe, Newcastle, KlipRiver, Bergville, Paulpietersburg and Umsinga, less land had been cultivated in the previous season in most areas as all the tilling had been done by the hoes.³⁵ There can be little doubt that the same situation prevailed in other districts. Certainly, the use of hoes meant that less land could be cultivated as human labour replaced animal labour. In many areas women and children had to carry out this heavy burden between 1905 and 1909.³⁶

The use of the hoes in many homestead communities had repercussions for food supply. Africans in the divisions where cultivation was carried out by the hoes suffered food shortages. Inadequate supplies of food were reported in Paulpietersburg and Ngotshe divisions in 1905.³⁷ In 1908 all the divisions that reportedly used the hoes experienced poor harvests.³⁸ This was a big blow to the survival of the homesteads. As with Rinderpest epidemic, the lack of oxen made homesteads vulnerable to malnutrition.

An attempt by the authorities to provide donkeys and mules as a substitute for oxen did not solve the problems of African cultivators. They were not available in the majority of the divisions in the colony. The 419 donkeys that the colonial government allocated to Africans in 1909 were not adequate to cover the colony.³⁹ In addition few Africans could afford to buy them because of the high purchase price.⁴⁰ This was in spite of the fact that the colonial government set aside £ 5000 to assist Africans in the purchase of donkeys, with each donkey costing £ 7,75. As a result the use of donkeys was reported in only

34. Magisterial Reports, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1908, pp 18-19.

35. Report by the District Native Commissioner of District no. 3, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1909, pp1xvi-1xvii.

36. Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1905-1909.

37. Magisterial Reports, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1905, pp 77-83.

38. Magisterial Reports, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1908, pp18-19.

39. Report by the Secretary for Native Affairs for Year 1909, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1909, p xi.

40. Report by the District Native Commissioner of District no. 2, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1909, p 1vi.

three divisions in the colony from 1907 to 1908. In the Natal Midlands, donkeys were used in Dundee and Umsinga.⁴¹ In Inanda division, south of the colony, Africans in the mission reserve bought donkeys in order to cultivate land.⁴² Those Africans in the mission reserve were better placed to access these draught animals because of their proximity to white areas.

In a number of homestead communities Africans hired white farmers to cultivate land for them, but, this, clearly, was not a widespread practice. Only three divisions were cited where white farmers carried out cultivation for Africans in the 1908-1909 period. In 1908 the magistrate for Ndwandwe Division reported that Africans hired a white farmer from Ngotshe Division to plough land.⁴³ In 1909 white farmers cultivated land for Africans in exchange for cash in Escourt. In Paulpietersburg white farmers charged 15s to 25s per day to cultivate land for Africans.⁴⁴ The loss of cattle in many homestead communities hampered efforts by Africans to raise cash so that they could pay for ploughing as cattle were also the source of income.⁴⁵

With less land cultivated with hoes, and with insufficient money either to buy donkeys or to hire white farmers to plough for them, few homesteads had sufficient supplies of grain by 1908. This shortage of grain in many divisions, particularly in 1908-1909, forced Africans to buy maize. In 1908 Africans were purchasing maize in the following divisions Mtunzini, Hlabisa, Ndwandwe, Mahlabathini, Ngotshe, Utrecht, Umsinga, Umvoti, Umgeni and Alexandra.⁴⁶ In 1909 reports on the purchase of grain by Africans were received from Krantzkop, Ixopo, Umlazi and Inanda divisions. Clearly, the increase

41. Magisterial Reports, Dundee and Umsinga divisions, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1907-1908.

42. Report by the District Native Commissioner of District no. 2, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1909, p 1vi.

43. Magisterial Reports: Ndwandwe Division, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1908, p 34.

44. Report by the District Native Commissioners of Districts no. 2 and no. 3, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1909, pp 1vi-1xvi.

45. Report by the Secretary for Native Affairs for the Year 1909, Natal, Department of Native Affairs *Annual reports*, 1909, p v.

46. Magisterial Reports, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1908, pp 11-32.

in the purchase of grain was a pointer to the disruption that East Coast Fever continued to cause in the African homesteads. Cash thus became an integral part of an African way of life and diminished the crucial role of a traditional household whose existence revolved around cattle.

In addition to general food shortages, the death of many cattle in the colony deprived African homesteads of milk that was crucial to the children's diet. Although few divisions were cited regarding milk shortages in the period 1905–1909, it is unlikely that the decimation of cattle would not have adversely affected milk production in the divisions affected by East Coast Fever. In 1905 shortages of milk were reported in Mahlabathini, Ndwandwe and Ngotshe divisions.⁴⁷ In Ngotshe Division, for example, Africans feared that their children would die because of the dire shortage of milk.⁴⁸ The seriousness of the problem in the Vryheid Division, in 1908, forced people to import milk from Mooi River,⁴⁹ while in Umsinga Division Africans resorted to goat's milk in order to supplement cow's milk in 1909.⁵⁰ The increase in the number of infants dying in the first year of life among Africans in 1908 could well be attributed to the shortage of milk.⁵¹ Although measles and whooping cough were said to be the primary causes of deaths, inadequate supply of milk as a factor cannot be discounted.

That many Africans had to use cash to buy basic household necessities, including grain was without a doubt an indication that money was gradually replacing cattle as the medium of exchange.⁵² Before the outbreak of Rinderpest and later East Coast Fever African homesteads could exchange their cattle for grain.⁵³ This practice enabled

47. Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1905, pp 83-107.

48. *Ibid.*, p 83.

49. SNA, NA Papers, Nos: 2-150, 1908, District Health Officer for Vryheid, *Minute Paper*, 4 January 1908.

50. Report by the District Native Commissioner of District no. 3, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1909, p1xvii.

51. Report on the Health of the Native Population, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1908, p 5.

52. Report of the Under Secretary for Native Affairs, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1907, p 3.

53. Lambert, *Betrayed trust*, p 44.

Africans to stave off hunger and malnutrition. However with the destruction of large herds and restrictions on the movement of cattle in the period 1907 –1909, Africans found it extremely difficult to enter into such transactions.⁵⁴

Furthermore, the loss of cattle meant that Africans were unable to sell stock to raise money for rents and taxes at a time when the colonial state and white farmers were increasing their financial demands on Africans. In the period 1903-1904, for example, squatters rent increased from £ 1 to £ 2 per hut per annum for Africans living on crown lands.⁵⁵ The introduction of the poll tax on all unmarried men in the colony and how it increased the tax burden on Africans was discussed in chapter three. Complaints against heavy taxation also featured prominently during the sittings of the Native Affairs Commission of 1906-7. The Commission was appointed to inquire into and report on matters pertaining to Native policy and administration, and other issues affecting Africans in the wake of the Bhambatha disturbances.⁵⁶

Witnesses from Indwedwe, Mapumulo, Ixopo, Richmond, Umgeni, Escourt, Ladysmith, Klip River, Lions River, Weenen, Greytown, New Hanover, Nkandhla and Eshowe divisions told the commissioners that they faced financial problems due to excessive rents they had to pay on private lands.⁵⁷ Socwatsha, representing chief Ndube of Magwaza chiefdom in Nkandhla Division, for instance, lamented that Africans were greatly indebted. Accordingly, they could not afford to pay rent of between £ 3 and £ 4 and in many cases, they were charged even £ 7 on private lands.⁵⁸ Chief Sibindi in Mapumulo Division revealed that Africans had to pay excessive rent to Europeans varying from £ 5 to £ 8, and £ 2 on crown lands.⁵⁹ This was a heavy financial burden on Africans. Even in

54. Magisterial Reports, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1908, p 12.

55. Report of the Under Secretary for Native Affairs for the Year 1905, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1905, p iii.

56. Natal, *Report of Native Affairs Commission*, 1906-7, p 2.

57. Natal, *Native Affairs Commission 1906-7, Evidence*, pp 718-859.

58. *Ibid.*, p 710.

59. *Ibid.*, p 844.

divisions which did not suffer heavy losses homestead heads could not sell their cattle in order to pay rent and taxes because they could not move them due to East Coast Fever restrictions on the movement of cattle.⁶⁰

In giving evidence to the Native Affairs Commission, the difficulty in the payment of taxes was raised in more than twenty divisions in the colony.⁶¹ As consequence of this, an increasing number of African household heads and their sons were forced to enter into migrant labour on white farms and in the emerging mining centres in Northern Natal as well as outside the borders of the colony in order to earn cash. In 1907 magistrates of a considerable number of divisions in the colony reported on the growing number of African males who were leaving their homesteads for migrant labour. A large number of migrant workers came from those divisions where East Coast Fever was reported to have destroyed many cattle. Those divisions included Hlabisa, Ngotshe, Nquthu, Nkandhla, Umsinga, Klip River, Umvoti, and Lower Tugela.⁶² The number of African males, for instance, entering migrant labour from Umsinga Division within and outside the colony increased from 1846 in 1905 to almost 5000 men in 1907.⁶³

There was no relief for Africans in the period 1908-1909. In 1908 Africans in many divisions found it extremely difficult to pay rents and taxes. In the south of the Thukela River, in places such as Umlazi, Alfred, Ixopo, Lower Tugela, Weenen and Escourt indebtedness was a prevalent feature.⁶⁴ This financial predicament forced an increasing number of African males to leave their homes for migrant labour mainly in the urban areas. In Lower Tugela Division, for example, a large number of Africans entered the labour market as migrant workers in order to meet their financial liabilities because there were practically no cattle in the division that could have been sold to pay rents and taxes.⁶⁵

60. Report of the Under Secretary for Native Affairs for the Year 1906, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1906, p 7.

61. Natal, *Native Affairs Commission 1906-7, Evidence*, pp 705-888.

62. Magisterial Reports, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1907, pp 15 – 82.

63. *Ibid.*, p 15.

64. Magisterial Reports, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1908, pp 11-29.

65. *Ibid.*, p 29.

The migrant labour system was a widespread phenomenon in the majority of divisions from 1908 onwards. This coincided with the worst cases of East Coast Fever and rising indebtedness in the homesteads. The records reflect that Zululand divisions such as Eshowe, Mtunzini, Mahlabathini, Ndwandwe, and Ngotshe suffered heavy indebtedness. In Mahlabathini, the hardship was attributed to the loss of cattle, the source of income, while it is stated that Africans in Ndwandwe Division used money intended for taxes to purchase food since the great portion of cultivation had been carried out with the hoes.⁶⁶ Certainly, the use of the hoes had resulted in less land being tilled thus resulting in an insufficient supply of food. In one of the chiefdoms in the division, people were said to be suffering from famine.⁶⁷

As a result Africans in Zululand, like in the rest of the colony, increasingly joined the ranks of migrant labourers. According to E. P. Shuter, the Agent for the Department of Native Affairs in Johannesburg, 3000 African males from Zululand alone were employed in the mines.⁶⁸ It was the first time that a figure for the number of Africans working in Johannesburg was released by the agency and it is not possible therefore to compare these figures with earlier statistics. It is noteworthy that Johannesburg was not the only destination. In Ndwandwe Division, for example, a large number of men were also reported to have left the division in search of employment in the Natal collieries.⁶⁹ Although Durban is not cited as one of the main destinations, it is likely that other Africans from Zululand went to the coastal city in search of work.

The situation was no better in 1909 as more divisions sank into debt. According to the Secretary for Native Affairs, Arthur Shepstone, owing to the heaviness of rents in many parts of the colony, Africans were frequently found greatly encumbered with debt due to severe cattle losses.⁷⁰ Difficulties in the payment of rents and taxes were reported in

66. *Ibid.*, p 33.

67. *Ibid.*

68. Johannesburg Agency Report for the Year 1908, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1908, p 10.

69. Magisterial Reports, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1908, p 33.

70. Report by the Secretary for Native Affairs for Year 1909, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1909, p iv.

Impendhle, Richmond, Alfred, Umvoti, Lower Tugela, Krantzkop, Nkandhla, Dundee, Klip River, Mahlabathini, Ndwandwe and Lower Umfolozi divisions.⁷¹ This again accelerated the migrant labour system as more African males left their homesteads in search of money in order to pay rents and taxes, and sustain homesteads. In one of the worst cases recorded, in 1909, all responsible homestead heads in Mapumulo are reported to have left the division for migrant labour in an attempt to obtain money to pay taxes.⁷²

In 1909 more African males left their divisions to work as migrant labourers outside the colony, their destinations being the Transvaal and Orange River Colony.⁷³ All the four Districts in the colony were affected. In District number one Umlazi Division recorded the largest number of Africans who left the division to work outside the colony. Inanda and lower Tugela divisions were the worst affected areas in District number two. In District number three, the majority of migrant labourers came from Ngotshe, Dundee and Umsinga divisions. In District number four a large number of African males left Nkandhla, Nquthu, Emtongjaneni, Mtunzini divisions to work mainly in the mining industry.⁷⁴ This increase in the number of males becoming migrant labourers was an indication of the deepening crisis in the homesteads. By 1909 many divisions in the colony were in a state of poverty.⁷⁵

The increasing number of Africans migrating into the urban centers in search of employment was a major change in a rural society. This was an indication that in many African communities the use of cash was no longer a matter of choice but had become a necessity. In the process, the African homestead society became part of incipient capitalism in South Africa albeit as a periphery because, in the long run, African areas

71. Reports by District Native Commissioners of Districts no. 1, 2, 3 and 4, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1909, pp xxx-Ixxxii.

72. SNA, NA Papers, Nos: 1078-1224, 1910, Mapumulo Division, *Minute Paper*, 30. 03. 1910.

73. Report by the Secretary for Native Affairs for Year 1909, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1909, p iii.

74. Report by the District Native Commissioner of District no. 4, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1909, pp xxx-Ixxvi.

75. Report of the Secretary for Native Affairs, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1909, p vi.

became reservoirs for cheap labour.⁷⁶ As a result most of the rural areas in Natal, like in other parts of South Africa, were characterized by rural decline and underdevelopment.⁷⁷

With many African males entering the migrant labour system the homesteads were deprived of many of their productive workers. Women and children had to take over jobs traditionally reserved for young men and homestead heads in the colonial period.⁷⁸ The absence of men meant that women had to take full responsibility for food production and the survival of the homesteads. According to the magisterial reports, by 1908 widespread tilling of the soil by women was evident in certain areas of Zululand and the Natal Midlands. The absence of men in Mtunzini, Ndwandwe, and Weenen Division forced women to carry out cultivation.⁷⁹

The cultivation of land by women signalled a change in gender relations where women assumed more demanding roles previously reserved for men. Before Rinderpest and East Coast Fever the role of women in food production was confined to the removal of weeds and harvesting. Now, in the absence of males they had to clear land for cultivation and build *izinqolobane* for the storage of grain.⁸⁰ These chores and the use of the hoes were an indication of the significant role that women had to play in order to sustain the homesteads. The use of the hoes, for example, was more demanding whereas previously men cultivated because they drove the oxen pulling the ploughs. In essence women were having to exercise authority in the homesteads and bear heavy responsibilities.

Moreover, the absence of men from the homesteads weakened the social bonds between fathers and children, on the one hand, and husbands and wives on the other hand. This was because men had to spend six to twelve months in places of employment particularly

76. Luli Callinicos, *Working life 1886-1940: A people's history of South Africa*, vol. 2 (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1987), p 19.

77. Martin Legassick, "Gold, agriculture and secondary industry in South Africa, 1885-1970: From Periphery to sub-metropole as a forced labour system" in Palmer, R. and Parsons, N., et al, *The roots of rural poverty in central and southern Africa* (London, Heinemann, 1977), p 175.

78. John Pampallis, *Foundations of the new South Africa* (London, Zeda Books Limited, 1991), p 33.

79. Magisterial Reports, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1908 pp 18 – 34.

80. Laband, *Rope of Sand*, p 6.

in the mines.⁸¹ In most cases children grew up seldom seeing their fathers, and wives were without husbands for long periods. Within these circumstances family ties were gradually eroded and old ways of living and the customs and the traditions of the past were slowly being undermined.⁸²

In 1907, for instance, there were reports on rapid loosening of the family ties in Vryheid Division where girls were apparently becoming unruly.⁸³ In some areas infrequent contact between husbands and wives led to an increase in the number of illegitimate births both in labour centers and homesteads.⁸⁴ This state of affairs was another testimony to the diminishing role of a homestead as a nucleus for an African traditional way of life. Furthermore, African migrant workers were not only exposed to cash in urban areas but they were also susceptible to criminal and immoral activities in urban centers. *Ilanga lase Natal* attributed the situation to overcrowding and lack of proper sanitation and influences from city values.⁸⁵ In 1908 crime, idleness and irresponsible living were reported to be prevalent among Africans from Umlazi division in the city of Durban.⁸⁶ These occurrences were pointers to what Africans regarded as social degeneration in a homestead society.

Another negative effect of East Coast Fever among homestead communities was the impact on the *Ilobolo* institution. In the period under consideration cattle were still given to the bride's family before marriage could be sanctified. A man had to have or be provided with by his parents not less than ten head of cattle for *Ilobolo* to take place.⁸⁷ This was a legal requirement enacted by the Natal Colonial Legislature in terms of the

81. Magisterial Reports, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1908, p 13.

82. John Lambert, "The undermining of the homestead economy in colonial Natal", *South African Historical Journal* 23, (1990), p 73.

83. Magisterial Report, Vryheid Division, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1907, p 61.

84. Lambert, "African Society in crisis", p 387.

85. *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 11 January 1907.

86. Magisterial Report, Umlazi Division, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1908, p 22.

87. *The James Stuart Archive*, vol. 4, p 55.

Natal Code of Native law.⁸⁸ With many of their cattle dead *abanumzana* found it extremely difficult to honour this customary obligation.

In the majority of divisions hardships surrounding the payment of *Ilobolo* were also the result of the restrictions placed on the movement of cattle. The prohibition on the movement of cattle meant that cattle for the payment of *Ilobolo* could not be sent between quarantine areas.⁸⁹ The significance of all these difficulties is reflected in the fact that the subject of *Ilobolo* featured prominently during the sittings of the Native Affairs Commission of 1906-1907.⁹⁰ Giving evidence before the Native Affairs Commission on April 4 1907, Chief Sotobe of the Indwedwe reserve revealed that it was almost impossible for young men to get cattle for *Ilobolo* because so many had perished.⁹¹ In some areas a bridegroom was allowed to pay a couple of head of cattle for marriage to take place.⁹² It should also be noted that a beast had to be slaughtered for a marriage to be sanctified, adding to the pressures on depleted herds. As a result of the death of livestock and restrictions on the movement of cattle, Africans in certain divisions raised deep concerns about hasty marriages, cohabitation and pregnancies outside marriages.⁹³

In view of the difficulty facing Africans in the payment of *Ilobolo*, in November 1907, the Department of Native Affairs issued a circular instructing magistrates to inform Africans that it would be permissible for the whole or any part of *Ilobolo* to be replaced by property other than cattle. Families involved were to discuss such arrangements and reach agreement.⁹⁴ In line with this Notice, Africans in Weenen Division were reportedly

88. Magisterial Report, Krantzkop Division, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1905, pp 34 –35.

89. Natal, *Debates of the Legislative Council of the colony of Natal*, Fourth (special) session, Fifth Parliament vol. XIX, 1909, p 142.

90. Natal, *Report of the Native Affairs Commission 1906 –7*, p 23.

91. Natal, *Native Affairs commission 1906 – 7 Evidence*, p 828.

92. *Ibid.*

93. *Ibid.*, pp 832-833.

94. Circular S. N. A. No. 27, 1907, Under Secretary for Native Affairs, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1907, p 125.

using goats and sheep to pay for *Ilobolo* in 1908.⁹⁵

This was intended to be a temporary measure but as East Coast Fever continued to destroy cattle in the colony, the colonial authorities again discussed the plight of Africans regarding *Ilobolo*. Amendments to customary law pertaining to *Ilobolo* were debated in the colony's Legislative Assembly on March 30 1909. The Prime Minister, Fredrick Moor was of the opinion that a provision in the *Lobolo* Bill be accepted that in respect of the entire loss of his cattle an African could be permitted to offer property in lieu of the usual *Ilobolo*, namely goats, money or any other class of property that the parties concerned would agree upon.⁹⁶ Secondly, on 23 April 1909, the Minister for Native Affairs sent a Circular to magistrates requesting them to forward suggestions on the amendments regarding *Ilobolo* regulations. This, it was pointed out, was necessary because Africans found it increasingly difficult to comply with *Ilobolo* owing either to the loss of cattle or prohibition of their movement.⁹⁷

Although documented responses from the magistrates could not be located during the research, it seems likely that cash became a preferred option in the payment of *Ilobolo*, given that African males had access to cash through the migrant labour system. In the long run this diminished the sanctity of the *Ilobolo* institution as some people, because of the use of cash, began to view *Ilobolo* as a commercial transaction with no cultural value.⁹⁸

In conclusion, the death of many cattle in African homestead communities was a big blow to a rural society that had begun to restock their herds after the disastrous losses during the Rinderpest epizootic. The cattle losses seriously hampered food production in

95. Magisterial Reports, Weenen Division, Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Annual reports*, 1908, p 20.

96. Natal, *Debates of the Legislative Council*, 1909, Fourth (special) Session, Fifth Parliament, vol. 19, 30 March 1909.

97. Natal, Department of Native Affairs, *Paper S. N. A. 1283 / 1909*.

98. *Isolezwe*, 2 December 2002.

the homesteads. The alternative means of cultivating land were not successful. Africans were forced to purchase grain. That necessitated the use of cash. This marked a new era in a traditional society where dependency on cash was no longer a matter of choice. The increasing financial demands on Africans by both white farmers and the government also made it difficult for Africans not to depend on cash. As a result an increasing number of African males entered the migrant labour system in order to earn cash not only to buy basic necessities, but also to meet the onerous financial obligations to the settler community. On the other hand, the absence of males led to gradual disintegration of the homesteads as units for social cohesion. Admittedly, the decimation of cattle in the first decade of the twentieth century accelerated the decline of African traditional way of life and impoverishment of the homestead society.⁹⁹

99. Lambert, "The impoverishment of the Natal peasantry, 1893-1910", p 304.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The outbreak of East Coast Fever in Southern Africa at the beginning of the twentieth century spelt disaster for the African homestead in Natal. The disease spread from Rhodesia in 1901 to the Transvaal in 1902. The rapid spread of the epizootic could be, in part, attributed to lack of sufficient and proper information on the disease that would have helped to alert the colonial governments earlier of the imminent catastrophe. However, this is not to underestimate the efforts by the veterinary surgeons and bacteriologists to isolate East Coast Fever from other diseases. It was due to the works of Robert Koch, Arnold Theiler, Charles Lounsbury, Stewart Stockman and Herbert Watkins-Pitchford that by 1903 it was accepted that East Coast Fever was a new disease and one of the deadly epizootics. This, then, gave the colonial governments in the region an opportunity to devise means of dealing with the disease. By the time the disease reached Natal, for instance, the colonial government was aware of the imminent danger.¹

In view of the unfolding situation, drastic steps that included the confiscation and the destruction of cattle found straying, were announced in the *Government Gazette* of 29 January 1904.² This Proclamation was one of the measures that marked the beginning of the campaign against East Coast Fever in the colony. As the disease spread throughout the colony more measures were introduced in an attempt to curb and eradicate East Coast Fever. The steps were principally aimed at assisting both African and white cattle

1. *Natal Blue Book Departmental reports*, 1903, p 94.

2. *Natal Agricultural Journal and Mining Record*, vol. VII, 1904, p 202.

owners. However, the manner in which those measures were carried out hindered the progress towards the successful eradication of the disease in the colony. It was shown in the course of the discussion that the campaign against East Coast Fever was, in most cases, characterized by an arbitrary approach. As a result, Africans were not treated as partners in the fight against the disease. They had to follow instructions regardless of inconvenience and suffering. This resulted in a situation where Africans viewed certain measures with suspicion. Such a situation eventually contributed to the spread of East Coast Fever and the destruction of cattle in the colony. On the whole, it should be noted, the campaign against the disease proved to be a mammoth and most difficult task facing the colonial governments in the region. Indeed, in the period under consideration the finality in the ultimate eradication of East Coast Fever seemed by no means to be at hand.³ The disease continued to ravage the region well beyond the 1940s.⁴

For Africans in Natal, the first decade of the twentieth century was a stressful time. East Coast Fever deprived them of their cattle, their traditional means of survival. The loss of cattle affected almost every aspect of the rural society. It has been shown that the destruction of cattle had serious repercussions for food production in the homesteads. The inability of homesteads to produce sufficient grain meant that homesteads were no longer able to operate as nuclei for survival. Africans began to look elsewhere in order to sustain life that was fast crumbling as a result of East Coast Fever aided by the discriminatory policies of the colonial state. Heavy taxation, for example, contributed immensely to indebtedness among Africans.

With more than eighty percent of their cattle dead, and increasing indebtedness, many African males were forced to move to urban areas in search of manual and menial jobs in order to strengthen the homestead economy that was under tremendous pressure from both natural disasters and human agency. Homesteads thus became reproductive centres for cheap labour to meet the demands of white employers.⁵

3. Diesel, "The campaign against East Coast Fever in South Africa", p 23.

4. Cranefield, *Science and Empire*, p 219.

5. Duminy and Guest, *Natal and Zululand from the earliest times to 1910*, p 429

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