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## WVA Position regarding Dog-Mediated Rabies

### WVA POSITION

- The World Veterinary Association (WVA) supports the view that dog-mediated rabies is an entirely preventable disease and that veterinarians have a key role to play in eliminating this risk to human health, and animal health and welfare.
- WVA recognizes the importance of community-based involvement and public-private partnerships to effectively control rabies.
- WVA encourages the establishment of an effective barrier to transmission of rabies between animals and from animals to humans by instituting effective vaccination programs for dogs and cats.
- WVA encourages the continuing research into and implementation of oral rabies vaccination for dogs.
- WVA encourages all countries to operate an effective early detection system and implement regulatory measures for the prevention and control of rabies including effective procedures for importation into free countries or areas.
- WVA encourages all countries to include rabies in the national list of diseases for mandatory notification and operate an effective disease surveillance and prevention system.
- WVA encourages all countries to adopt the WOA's standards and guidelines on the promotion of responsible pet ownership, which can significantly reduce the number of stray dogs and the incidence of dog bites and zoonotic diseases, especially rabies.
- Mass vaccination campaigns rather than depopulation campaigns should be a long-term goal for rabies control. Humane culling should be used only as a last resort in areas where rabies disease is a significant risk.
- WVA believes there are situations where rabies virus immunization must extend to domestic livestock.
- Where wild mammals are known as potential reservoirs or vectors of rabies virus and there is a known and effective oral-vaccine delivery system, WVA encourages the implementation of oral vaccination programs to control, eliminate, and eradicate rabies in wildlife
- Veterinarians should have an active and key role in educating the public about the risk of this viral disease. This includes distribution of readily accessible information on the prevention of personal exposure to rabid animals.

As frontline workers in the animal health field, the WVA believes that veterinarians and veterinary para-professionals are potentially at a higher risk of exposure to rabies virus and thus should be given priority to be recipients of vaccination for receiving rabies pre-exposure prophylaxis against rabies, especially in areas where the disease has a high prevalence.

## **BACKGROUND**

Rabies causes approximately 59000 human deaths around the world every year. About 99%<sup>1</sup> of these deaths originate from exposure to rabid dogs; herewith many (40%) victims are children. Vaccination for the disease in dogs will break the cycle of its transmission from dogs and save the lives of several tens of thousands of humans globally. To establish an appropriate level of protection from rabies at the national level there is a need to ensure that at least 70% of dogs in the country are covered by vaccination and that all victims of dog bite have prompt access post-exposure prophylaxis. However, to maintain an appropriate level of protection from rabies, many other tools must also be deployed, including proper risk assessment, surveillance, early detection and control of the disease in wildlife.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.who.int/health-topics/rabies#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/rabies#tab=tab_1)