



## **On World Rabies Day, WVA and WMA united to call for “Breaking Rabies Boundaries”**

To mark World Rabies Day on 28 September 2024, the World Veterinary Association (WVA) and the World Medical Association (WMA) demand continued efforts to eliminate rabies. Under the theme “Breaking Rabies Boundaries”, the two organisations advocate for a One Health approach, vaccination for high-risk groups, and universal access to rabies treatment.

Rabies, a fatal yet preventable disease, is estimated to cause [59 000](#) human deaths a year across 150 countries, according to the World Health Organization. 95% of cases occur in Africa and Asia. This makes it a significant public health threat in those regions.

The WVA and the WMA in their support for a One Health approach, call for actions that emphasize the interconnectedness of human, animal, and environmental health in the fight to break the cycle of rabies transmission.

“A unified approach to “Breaking Rabies Boundaries” is critical to ensure that this preventable disease is no longer a threat to human or animal health,” said Dr Lujain Alqodmani, President of the World Medical Association. “Rabies vaccination is a powerful preventive measure for people living in areas where rabies is prevalent or those likely to come into contact with rabies-infected animals, like veterinarians, animal handlers and travellers to affected regions.”

Dr John De Jong, President of the World Veterinary Association, added, “Vaccination of dogs and wildlife is one of the most effective ways to break the rabies transmission cycle. Dog-bites are responsible for up to 99% of human rabies cases, therefore canine vaccination campaigns are critical in regions where rabies is prevalent. Additional wildlife vaccination programs aimed at species such as bats, foxes, and raccoons can also reduce the spread of rabies from wildlife to humans and domestic animals.”

Deaths from rabies are preventable through prompt post exposure prophylaxis (PEP) to prevent the virus from reaching the central nervous system. PEP includes thorough wound washing, a course of human rabies vaccine and if indicated, rabies immunoglobulins (RIG). However, universal access to this life-saving treatment is not yet a reality in many parts of the world.

[WVA](#) and [WMA](#) call for a concerted global effort to ensure that universal access to rabies treatment becomes a reality for all, regardless of geographic location or financial status.

World Rabies Day continues to highlight the importance of eliminating rabies and the ultimate objective remains the eradication of this deadly disease by 2030, as outlined in the ‘Zero by 30 plan’ by WHO, WOA (formerly OIE), FAO and GARC.

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