

**Joint American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA)-Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA)-
Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) Statement on**

THE GLOBAL CONTROL OF DOG-MEDIATED RABIES: A ONE HEALTH IMPERATIVE

Rabies is a zoonotic viral disease of mammals that is endemic in many countries. The virus can be transmitted to people via direct contact with saliva of an infected animal through a bite or other open wound. Rabies is almost always fatal to humans unless post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) is administered shortly after exposure. Domestic dogs, along with multiple wild mammalian species (eg, bats, foxes, raccoons, skunks), can serve as a reservoir for the rabies virus. Dog-mediated rabies is a serious public health risk in countries that have a high number of unvaccinated and free-roaming dogs (owned or stray) living in close proximity to humans.

The [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#), [World Organization for Animal Health \(OIE\)](#), and [Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations \(FAO\)](#) estimate that more than 59,000 people die of rabies every year, largely in the less economically advantaged regions of the world. Moreover, domestic dogs carrying the canine variant of the rabies virus are responsible for viral transmission in 99% of those deaths, with approximately 40% of people bitten by suspect rabid dogs being children younger than 15 years of age. Given the key role of dogs in transmission of the rabies virus to humans and the concurrent central role dogs play in service to humans, whether as pets or working animals, vaccination of dogs against rabies is a critically important and effective means of protecting children and adults from contracting this deadly disease and strengthening the human-animal bond.

Although dogs carrying the canine variant of the rabies virus are the primary source of rabies in humans globally, dogs can also become infected with wildlife rabies variants even in regions in which the canine variant has been eliminated. Dogs infected in this manner may also transmit rabies to humans. Therefore, control of rabies in wildlife and ongoing vaccination programs for dogs are both critical to the goal of eliminating human deaths from dog-mediated rabies in all regions of the world.

The AVMA, CVMA, and FVE recognize that the veterinary medical profession has the education, training, and experience to play a leading role in developing and implementing control and eradication programs targeting dog-mediated rabies. Indeed, in some countries dog-mediated rabies has largely been eliminated due to the essential work of veterinarians taking a One Health approach and collaborating with other public health practitioners, laboratory diagnosticians, epidemiologists, animal control agencies, local community members, regulators, and legislators to implement effective control measures. This work includes, but is not limited to, risk assessment; program design, management, evaluation, and communication; and rabies virus and vaccine research.

The AVMA, CVMA, and FVE believe that effective programs designed to eradicate dog-mediated rabies in a humane manner must include the following components:

- Public education campaigns targeting both adults and children regarding the serious nature of rabies in animals and people alike; effectiveness of vaccination as a means to prevent transmission of the rabies virus both within dog populations and from dogs to humans; benefits and responsibilities of dog ownership; importance of dog bite prevention; key steps to take following contact with a potential or confirmed rabid animal; and acceptable and humane approaches to management of canine populations that may serve as viral reservoirs.
- Mandatory vaccination and revaccination of both owned and non-owned dogs coupled with centralized identification and registration of all dogs at the local, state, regional, and/or national level.
- Policies and protocols to regulate the movement of dogs within and across regions.

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- Policies and protocols for the quarantine and euthanasia, as appropriate, of exposed or infected dogs, respectively.
- Diagnostic laboratory capacity for rapid and accurate post-mortem diagnosis of suspected rabid animals, including dogs and wildlife, as a means to better monitor disease prevalence and effectiveness of control programs and provide guidance on appropriate PEP and medical follow-up after human exposure.
- Ready access to appropriate PEP, including trained medical providers to advise on and administer PEP to exposed people.
- Humane, effective, and sustainable control of free-roaming dog populations.
- Transparent reporting of information regarding incidence of rabies in dogs and other animals to key stakeholders and, when appropriate, to the public both locally and in neighboring jurisdictions. For example, the [Canadian Food Inspection Agency \(CFIA\)](#) and the [US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) provide online information regarding the incidence of rabies in animals on an annual basis in Canada and the U.S.A, respectively.
- Sufficient public and private resources to fully implement and maintain the above noted components, including effective and consistent enforcement of regulations, policies, and protocols designed to support an effective rabies control program.

The AVMA, CVMA, and FVE acknowledge and promote existing resources from national, regional, international, and intergovernmental organizations, and urge these organizations to work collaboratively to more effectively assist countries in establishing, administering, and refining dog-mediated rabies control and eradication programs.

Available resources include, but are not limited to the following:

- [Zero by 30: the Global Strategic Plan to end Human Deaths from Dog-Mediated Rabies by 2030](#), from the WHO, OIE, FAO, and the Global Alliance for Rabies Control (GARC).
- [The OIE Rabies Portal](#).
- [AVMA Model Rabies Control Ordinance](#).
- The latest edition of the [Compendium of Animal Rabies Prevention and Control](#), from the National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians.
- [The Veterinary Vision on Stray Dog Management](#), from the FVE, Federation of European Companion Animal Veterinary Association, and the Union of European Veterinary Practitioners.

The AVMA, CVMA, and FVE also:

- Encourage their members to share their skills and expertise in developing and implementing rabies control programs with colleagues in other regions of the world through continuing education programs, consultations, and other collaborative activities.
- Support recommendations outlined in the [OIE-World Small Animal Veterinary Association \(WSAVA\) Joint Statement on Control of Canine Rabies \(2013\)](#) and the [World Veterinary Association \(WVA\)-World Medical Association \(WMA\) joint press release \(2017\)](#), both of which delineate the strong intersectoral commitment needed to eliminate human deaths from dog-mediated rabies and control rabies in animals, using a One Health approach.
- Believe that human deaths due to dog-mediated rabies can be eliminated through One Health collaborations among animal, human, and public health professionals, laboratory diagnosticians, epidemiologists, animal control agencies, legislators, governing bodies of existing and new control programs, and members of local impacted communities.
- Support the development and expansion of rabies control programs to include both domestic animals and wildlife, particularly in areas in which the canine-variant rabies virus has been eradicated but wildlife variants remain endemic.

- Will continue to advocate for sufficient support for effective rabies control programs from governmental and non-governmental organizations alike.

Background information of partners concerned:

1. The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA; www.avma.org), Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA; www.canadianveterinarians.net), and Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE; www.fve.org) are three of the leading veterinary professional organizations in the world. Together they represent over 330,000 veterinarians in all disciplines of the veterinary profession.
2. The mission of the AVMA is to lead the veterinary medical profession by advocating for its members and advancing the science and practice of veterinary medicine to improve animal and human health.
3. The CVMA is the voice of the Canadian veterinary profession in promoting animal welfare and One Health, to ensure optimal care for animals, people, and the environment.
4. The FVE strives to enhance animal health, animal welfare, public health, and the protection of the environment by promoting the veterinary profession. Together with its members, FVE aims to support veterinarians in delivering their professional responsibilities to the best possible standard, and that this expertise is recognized and valued by society.