



VISEGRAD VET PLUS

Position/Call to Action

Fear of mass rabies outbreak in Europe due to war in Ukraine

Overview and risks of rabies

Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, millions of cats and dogs have been abandoned in the war-torn region. In Ukraine, rabies is present in both wild and domestic animals. The war in Ukraine forces many refugees to bring pets into the EU that do not meet current health requirements. These pets entering the EU can come in contact with non-vaccinated animals (pets and wild animals) of officially rabies-free countries. Rabies infection leads to death in 100% of human and animal cases if there is no immediate intervention. Post Exposure Prophylaxis of people is only effective if it is given 5 days after infection. Therefore, tracing of contacts as quickly as possible is essential.

Executive summary

After listening to the reports of veterinarians from Ukraine about the growing threat of rabies and information about numerous new cases of rabies in pets in Ukraine during the Annual Spring Assembly of Visegrad Vet + Group in Kołobrzeg (2023.05.12-14), all national organizations of veterinarians from many European countries noted that the risk of rabies is highly significant in veterinary opinion. Therefore, it is necessary to initiate a coordinated action of governments of European countries together with veterinary organizations and NGOs to help Ukraine in managing the problem of rabies in One Health way.

For this purpose, veterinarians kindly ask the governments of EU countries for a quick, joint action to help Ukraine in the field of:

1. replenishing national stocks of vaccines for humans and animals against rabies and post-prophylactic treatment for humans, if needed.
2. organization of mass vaccination, sterilization and identification of stray pets/ domestic animals against rabies in Ukraine (at least 100 veterinarians - volunteers are needed) in collaboration with local veterinary clinics.
3. participation in organization of vaccination of wild animals in Ukraine (oral rabies vaccination (ORV))



VISEGRAD VET PLUS

4. ensuring appropriate level of laboratory diagnostics for rabies in Ukraine to enable detection of all cases of rabies and testing for rabies antibodies.
5. creating additional shelters for stray dogs, if needed, and supporting existing ones.

adopted by vote on 13th May 2023