Education and Messaging

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Related Guides

Guidelines for Classroom Education & Public Awareness on Responsible Pet Ownership & Rabies Prevention
Guidelines for Mass Dog Vaccination: Introduction
Preparation for Vaccination
Dog Capture and Handling
Rapid Response to Suspect Rabid Dog Alerts
1. Introduction

Community education to generate public awareness of rabies and support for rabies control measures is vital for sustainable rabies control programs. This includes both public awareness campaigns and educating children through schools.

Public awareness campaigns aim to:

- Raise awareness on the importance of protecting and respecting dogs.
- Generate support for vaccination programs.
- Inform communities about upcoming programs and reasons behind them.
- Inform dog owners and communities of their responsibilities to help care for and protect dogs and about dog bite management.

Educating children through school programs is vital as:

- School children often share messages learnt at school with their families.
- Children are most commonly bitten by dogs (according to WHO ‘4 out of every 10 human deaths by rabies occur in children younger than 15 years’).
- Children are often aware of, and play with either owned or community dogs, and can often be involved in finding and bringing dogs for vaccination.
- Young people are the next generation of decision makers.

This guide aims to provide key messages for government officials, personnel and stakeholders on Mass Dog Vaccination (MDV) programs (both as deliverers and receivers) and to provide a list of resources to develop and implement formal and informal education / public awareness initiatives.

2. Understanding local cultures

It is vital to understand local culture, religion and attitudes towards dogs before planning a MDV program. This will enable you to identify key issues and plan methods to optimize the support of communities. For example: what are the roles of dogs in the community (i.e. protectors of crops, companions, used/sold for meat); are roaming dog numbers regarded as an issue; and what is the history of rabies in the area?

It is also important to understand the general level of knowledge of rabies and any misperceptions held by the local community so that education and public awareness methods can address these and the messages can be easily understood. This includes preparing vaccination team members for answering questions from both dog owners and nonowners.

3. Information on rabies

Facts about rabies

- Rabies is a viral disease that is transmitted through the saliva or tissues from the nervous system from an infected mammal to another mammal.
- Rabies is the deadliest disease on earth with a 99.9% fatality rate. It is always fatal once clinical symptoms appear.
- Most human rabies cases (90%) are caused by exposure to an infected dog.
- Postexposure prophylaxis (PEP) stops the virus before clinical symptoms appear, if given immediately after a bite from a rabid or suspect rabid animal.
For these and more facts about rabies, please refer to the Global Alliance for Rabies Control (GARC) website: http://rabiesalliance.org/rabies/whatisrabiesandfrequentlyaskedquestions/whatisrabies/.

**Interpreting dog behaviours**
Please refer to the guide ‘Dog Capture and Handling’.

**Controlling rabies: Mass Dog Vaccination (MDV)**
- MDV is the only proven, effective, sustainable, and humane way to control rabies.
- Annual vaccination of at least 70% of the dogs in an area creates ‘herd immunity’, slowing the spread of rabies until it dies out.
- For more information on MDV programs, refer to ‘Guidelines for Mass Dog Vaccination: Introduction’ and ‘Preparation for Vaccination’.
- Dog culling is ineffective for controlling either rabies or dog population numbers, and causes needless suffering to dogs and their owners. There is a high risk of including vaccinated dogs in culls resulting in a reduction in the herd immunity that has been built up over years of annual vaccinations, potentially jeopardising rabies control efforts and wasting the resources invested in the program. Additionally, after culling the dog population quickly regenerates itself with unvaccinated dogs (new puppies or dogs relocating from other areas).

**Exposure, prevention and treatment**
- Anyone bitten or scratched by a dog in a rabies infected area should wash the wound immediately under running water for 15 minutes with soap, then disinfect with ethanol (700ml/l) or iodine (tincture or aqueous solution) if available. Then they should immediately go to the nearest approved hospital or bite treatment centre for an assessment of whether postexposure rabies vaccination is needed – this includes dog owners assisting staff with vaccination and staff that have been previously vaccinated.
- For more information see the GARC website Exposure, prevention and treatment.

**4. Key Messages for Mass Dog Vaccination**

**Messages for communities**

1. **Vaccinated dogs – Safer communities.** Collared/marked dogs are working to control rabies.
2. **Mass Dog Vaccination is the only effective and humane way to control rabies.** Culling dogs does not control rabies (i.e. vaccinated dogs are killed reducing the rabies immunity of the population, hence working against rabies control efforts) and causes needless suffering for dogs and their owners.
3. **Your dog is your responsibility.** Responsible dog ownership involves:
   - Buy only vaccinated puppies
   - Desexing / sterilising your dog
   - Allowing your dog to run and play but control any roaming freely
   - Vaccinating your dog annually against rabies
   - Vaccinating your dog against other diseases (such as distemper and parvovirus) and protecting them from parasites, as advised by a veterinarian
   - Registering your dog
- Ensuring good welfare through providing appropriate shelter, nutritious food, clean water, adequate exercise, and companionship (with people and / or other dogs).

4. **Understand basic dog behaviours to prevent dog bites:**
   - Dogs are not naturally aggressive animals. Stay safe around dogs by respecting their feelings and behaviours.
   - Stay away from suspect rabid dogs/dogs behaving strangely (see guide ‘Rapid Response to Rabid and Suspect Rabid Dog Alerts’ for further guidance on identifying suspect rabid dogs).

5. **Dog bite management**
   - Know what to do if bitten
   - Report all dog bites
   - Report any suspect rabid dogs to authorities.

6. **Promote good animal welfare:**
   - Good animal welfare is an integral part of ensuring animal health.
   - An animal that is in good health is deemed to be fit and able to cope physically and mentally with its environment, as well as being able to display natural behaviours.

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### The Messengers

Those who are delivering the messages need to know key facts about rabies, and details of the MDV program, dog bite management and responsible dog ownership (RDO).

Vaccination team members who have personal contact with dog owners during MDV programs, have a valuable opportunity to educate community members about rabies prevention and RDO.

Additionally, vets in clinics, school teachers and community leaders, either during or outside programs, can play a vital role in educating people and raising awareness and public support for programs.

Key messages for each of the messengers to deliver are outlined in the following table.

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<tr>
<th>Messengers</th>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Key Messages</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dog owners</td>
<td>Carers of community dogs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vaccinators for MDV; Vets in clinics</td>
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</table>
| Dog catchers and handlers | Yes | Yes | No | • How to safely handle and restrain your dog (for more details see the guide ‘Dog Capture and Handling’).  
• The importance of keeping the dog’s collar on / marking indicating the dog is vaccinated  
• The importance of annual vaccination and registering dogs  
• The importance of keeping dogs off the streets |
| Community Liaison Officers/champions | Yes | Yes | Yes | • MDV programs control rabies  
• Details of the MDV program: where to bring dogs, about capture of roaming dogs, time frame  
• Killing dogs doesn’t control rabies  
• Help with locate roaming dogs  
• Dog registration |
| Local community leaders | Yes | Yes | Yes | • Annual MDV programs control rabies and need community support  
• Dog registry updating and maintenance  
• Killing dogs doesn’t control rabies |
| School teachers | Children of | Children of | Children of | • Facts about rabies  
• If a dog is roaming / stray, it does not mean they have rabies  
• Understanding dog behaviour and dog bite prevention  
• Responsible pet ownership  
• Being safe around dogs. Dogs are not naturally aggressive, staying safe by respecting their feelings and behaviours  
• Killing dogs doesn’t control rabies  
• Legislations on animal welfare |

*Also refer to ‘Guidelines for Classroom Education & Public Awareness on Responsible Pet Ownership & Rabies Prevention’ for further guidance on tailoring messaging for the general public and school children.*
Recommended Resources

General resources

World Animal Protection (Formerly WSPA)

- Guidelines for Classroom Education & Public Awareness on Responsible Pet Ownership & Rabies Prevention:
- Rabies and herd immunity: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f_3XTFcdDrXc
- 5 keys to preventing dog bites (please contact World Animal Protection)
- Responsible dog ownership (please contact World Animal Protection)

Global Alliance for Rabies Control (GARC)

- Resources: http://rabiesalliance.org/resources/
- Factsheets: http://rabiesalliance.org/resources/factsheets/ (multiple languages)
- Resources in English: http://rabiesalliance.org/uploads/media/Resources_in_English/
- Canine Rabies Blueprint: http://caninerabiesblueprint.org/

Other

- World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE): Fighting Rabies in Asia:
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RS4_38sZF3w&feature=share&list=UUYWwT1w9Yv2qpKChz9Ho0mg
- Doggone Safe: Dog Safety for Children – Be a Tree™ Program: http://www.beatree.com/

School education and other formal programs

Rabies

World Animal Protection (Formerly WSPA)

- Guidelines for Classroom Education & Public Awareness on Responsible Pet Ownership & Rabies Prevention:

Global Alliance for Rabies Control (GARC)

- Lesson plans (various authors): http://rabiesalliance.org/resources/teaching-children/