



RABID BYTES

The Newsletter of
The Alliance for Rabies Control

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Editorial

These days it seems that there is plenty to be excited about concerning rabies! The global rabies community has worked hard to increase global awareness of how to prevent rabies during the past 18 months. International organizations such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and GAVI have recently included rabies in their particular diseases of importance. This begins to open the door of opportunity for many people working in the field of rabies prevention.

One of the most wide-ranging activities that all of us have helped to promote is World Rabies Day (WRD) and as you will read in this edition, this year's WRD is expected to be a bigger event than we saw for 2007! We also have a report from Jim Desmond (student Essay award winner for WRD 2007) about his exciting externship to the Serengeti. On behalf of The Alliance, I would also like to thank our team of reviewers who spent numerous hours reviewing more than 40 proposals that were submitted to The Alliance for funding earlier this year. The review team of Dr Cathleen Hanlon, Dr Robert Dedmon, Dr George Beran, Dr Enid

Stiles, and Mike Altemeier finally selected five proposals that will be funded through The Alliance with funds raised through WRD 2007 activities by veterinary students and matched by Veterinarians Without Borders/Veterinaires Sans Frontiers, Canada and another generous private donation. We look forward to telling you more about these projects in our Newsletter over the next three years.

You will also find information in this newsletter about the formation of a new informal group "Partners for Rabies Prevention" that is envisioned as a platform to bring together all stakeholders to develop a road map for global rabies control. Finally, with the second WRD just around the corner (September 28, 2008), we encourage all of our readers to either organize or participate in one of the many activities planned to increase rabies awareness across the world. As always, I encourage each one of our readers to contact us if you would like to publish information about rabies in one of our next Newsletters.

Dr Deborah Briggs, Executive Director of The Alliance

Preventing bat rabies in the rainforest of Southern Brazil

Although no human case of rabies has been reported in Paraná State, Southern Brazil for more than twenty years, rabies transmitted by bats has been a growing concern due to the local exposed population and the reduction of bat population control in rainforest preserved areas. In 2007, two non-hematophagous bats from Pontal do Paraná on the Southern Brazilian coast were found positive on all the routine diagnosis tests for rabies. In the same year, Paraná State Secretary of Agriculture received reports of bat bites on the island inhabitants of Guaraqueçaba County (location 25° 17' 30"S and 48° 09' 08"W) at night while they were sleeping. This county is in a preservation area located only 25 miles from both positive bats.

Due to the potential risks of animal and human rabies, an educational program on rabies transmitted by bats was carried out in April 2008, by the Federal University of Paraná, the Animal Health Service of the Paraná State Secretary of Agriculture and Supply and the Guaraqueçaba County Secretary of Education. This reached all 50 teachers and 684 students (from 6 to 12 years old) of the 31 Guaraqueçaba primary schools. Half of the schools were located on islands with difficult access, as far as 30 miles from the town, some with no electric power and with low income inhabitants.

The program lasted five consecutive working days, and was performed by five groups each including a university faculty member, a State Secretary employee and a veterinary student. Classes were given on battery powered laptops, and included information from an educational video and a cartoon-based folder. After classes, a questionnaire was given to students and teachers to evaluate the effectiveness of the information, as well as questions regarding the potential exposure to bats. Students reported seeing bats at night, as well as handling and touching bats with sticks and bare hands in the daytime, sometimes at the school. Teachers and students reported bat bites on people, mostly relatives. However, vampire bat bites were more often reported on chickens, dogs, cats, cattle and horses. All schools reported the historical presence of bats in their facilities. Bats on the roof or bat traces (faeces or urine odour) were observed in some schools.

The Guaraqueçaba rabies educational program was suggested to be effective at preventing children handling bats. Since most teachers and students live in communities surrounding schools, local spread of information regarding rabies transmitted by bats is also expected. Finally, the program presented a unique opportunity to recognize that a high frequency of children handling non-hematophagous bats in the daytime may present a higher exposure to rabies infection than bites from vampire bats while people are sleeping.

This piece was contributed by Maria do Carmo Pessôa Silva, from the Epidemiology Section, Secretaria de Estado da Agricultura e do Abastecimento do Paraná, Brazil. Information on zoonosis control in the region is at www.zoonoses.agrarias.ufpr.br/ingles/index.htm



Classroom presentation about bat rabies

WRD competition winner visits Serengeti

James S Desmond, a veterinary student at Tufts University, USA, won the World Rabies Day 2007 essay competition. This is his account of his prize trip.



"I had an incredible time during my two week field internship with the Carnivore Disease Project in Serengeti National Park, Tanzania. I had barely arrived when a report came in that an apparently ill genet had been observed near one of the Park's lodges. The following day I accompanied a team of people to pick up the genet. Unfortunately it had already died but we were able to perform a necropsy, although no definitive conclusions were reached. It was an exciting start to my trip and also a glimpse at passive disease surveillance within the park. I learned this is an essential component of disease monitoring within the Serengeti Park. The team diligently tracks down and examines all reports of dead or ill carnivores in an attempt to determine the cause of death. In addition, they also monitor population abundance of the different carnivore species as another indicator of possible disease outbreaks.

After the first few days meeting the team and learning about the project from a big picture perspective, I was able to accompany the vaccination team to several villages north and west of the park. What a great experience! The project has a very dedicated and well trained team that works tirelessly to reach as many animals as possible to form a vaccination ring around the park. While I was there, we visited four villages to the north of the park, where we were able to vaccinate between 200 and 400 dogs per day against rabies and canine distemper. Long lines formed and people would wait for hours to get their animals vaccinated. It was clear that the villagers truly appreciated the service being offered as they had seen the health of their animals improve and a significant decrease in diseases such as rabies being transmitted to their children. In addition to the health benefits provided to villagers and their pets, there has been a dramatic decrease in rabies and distemper outbreaks in the wild carnivore populations inside the park. Not only was it a great experience for me from a veterinary perspective, it was a lot of fun as well.

Following our trip to the north of the park we traveled west to the beautiful Loliondo area. Here we were able to visit several Maasai villages to learn about how the vaccination program affected their communities for the better. This was another great experience for me to learn a small amount about how these amazing people live. We took a beautiful drive through the park to return to the Park headquarters. On the drive I was lucky enough to see an abundance of wild game and also see a large portion of the Serengeti. I had a wonderful, educational and exciting trip and feel very lucky to have been chosen to visit the project."

Alliance's New Discussion board

The Alliance has recently established an online discussion board (or forum) where ARC members and friends can post information or ask questions about rabies and its prevention. This discussion board is being initially conducted on a trial basis, but we hope that the exchange of information and discussion will become a useful source of reference information for anyone working or interested in rabies control.

The discussion board can be found at <http://rabiescontrol.creaforum.net/index.htm> and anyone can view all of the information posted. In order to add information, questions, or replies you will need to be registered. This is a simple process involving the selection of a username, password and providing an email address. You will receive a confirmation email, and when you have clicked onto the link you will be able to add new postings. I invite everyone to take a look at the forum, and add new postings to it. Currently we have sections for Information from ARC, information from members and questions from members. Clicking on the title will enable you to see the postings within the category. There is a brief introduction to how the forum works under 'information from ARC' which may assist you, and there is a 'frequently asked questions (FAQ)' section that provides more detailed help. We hope that you will find this new discussion board worthy and we invite any feedback.

Louise Taylor, the moderator of the discussion forum, louise.taylor@rabiescontrol.net

Partners for Rabies Prevention

The Alliance was delighted to organize a meeting, held in Banna, Italy on May 7-8 2008 to discuss the establishment of a Partners for Rabies Prevention Informal Group. The meeting brought together leaders in the field of rabies prevention and control from all the major international agencies involved in rabies (WHO, FAO, OIE, WHO rabies collaborating centres, research scientists, representatives from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and representatives from industry). The meeting was generously hosted by one of ARC's directors, Mr. Federico Spinola at the Fondazione Spinola headquarters, located in a stunning villa in beautiful countryside near Turin. There is no doubt that the wonderful hospitality, food and surroundings created the perfect environment in which to move forward ideas on rabies control. The meeting comprised a series of presentations highlighting progress in areas of rabies control globally, examples of canine rabies elimination demonstration projects and the outcomes of the World Rabies Day campaign in 2007, followed by working groups and discussions.

The principal discussion focused on moving towards a global vision for rabies prevention and control, together with development of a strategic plan towards achieving this vision. A major objective was identified as the global elimination of canine rabies. Five activities were identified as the main pillars within the strategic plan: advocacy, capacity building, communications, pilot projects and research and development. Leaders and contributors to each of these groups were identified from within the informal group, with overall coordination by Dr. Deborah Briggs. The aim for each group is to carry out a gap analysis, identify actions, timelines and costs towards achieving each group's objectives. These will be discussed further at the next meeting of the informal group, following the RITA meeting in Atlanta in October.

Contributed by Sarah Cleaveland of The Alliance

World Rabies Day 2008 Update



WRD Celebration in Paraguay.
Photo: Isabel Sánchez Soto

ownership and the importance of rabies prevention. These are real opportunities to positively augment well-established programs, provide vital, fundamental education about rabies prevention, and potentially save lives”, says Costa.

This year many new partners have joined the campaign to Make Rabies History and we are receiving reports of events being planned worldwide. For example, in Peru, a WRD commemorative stamp is expected to be released following the release of a WRD postmark in 2007. In Canada, a nationwide rabies awareness effort is being planned by the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association. In South Africa, rabies prevention messages will be disseminated through numerous communities and in West Africa, the Ghana SPCA is planning to distribute rabies brochures and pamphlets. In the US, multiple events are being planned including a competition amongst veterinary corps officers in the Army Medical Department, a “Run for Rabies” at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and numerous events at the veterinary schools such as the World Rabies Day Festival and Race planned at Kansas State University. In the Philippines, the Department of Agriculture is planning to develop and distribute rabies prevention posters to local government units. In Pakistan, where 3,000-5,000 people die annually from rabies, two separate rabies



Working Together to Make Rabies History postmark, Peru, 2007

awareness programs are being planned in Karachi; one for school children, teachers and parents to be held in areas where dog bites are most commonly reported and another for health care workers focusing on post exposure prophylaxis.

The WRD website (www.worldrabiesday.org) continues to serve as the global hub of communications for the campaign and houses numerous pre-existing and newly developed support materials. Some materials that might be beneficial include a customisable drop-in news article to help spread the word, updated presentations, fact sheets and toolkits (for media and veterinarians), a 5K and 10K run training/planning guide, downloadable screen print designs for event t-shirts and new country specific WRD apparel and merchandise.

To date, the website has seen over 50,000 visitors with enquiries from 181 countries (see map) and continues to draw interest from those seeking general campaign information, personal stories about rabies, photos, downloadable logos (now in 28 languages) and numerous educational resources for children, pet owners, the public, teachers, and veterinarians.



Available via the WRD website

World Rabies Day 2008 is shaping up to be a great success with some events already underway and others not planned to commence until December. It's important to remember that rabies prevention is essential throughout the year and that WRD events can be observed or celebrated on any day. An easy way to get involved is by promoting rabies awareness at existing pre-planned events such as; low cost vaccination or spay/neuter clinics, pet adoption venues or any event where the public congregates with their animals. “This campaign is all about raising rabies awareness and we invite everyone to get involved”, says Peter Costa, Communications Coordinator for The Alliance.

“Many organizations throughout the world hold vaccination clinics regularly. These are prime venues at which to spread the message about responsible pet

LIKAYE ANG RABIS

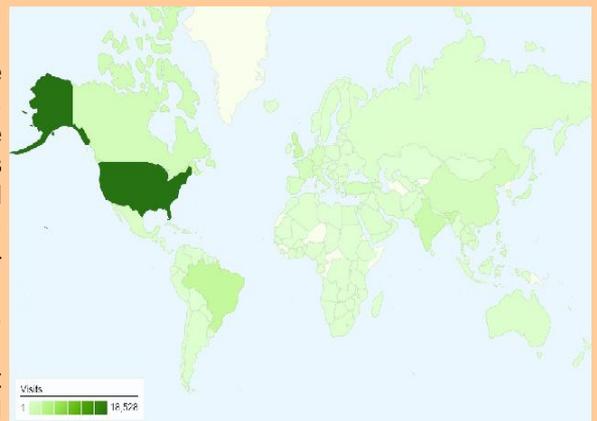
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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Regional Field Unit 7
Cebu City, Philippines

Proposed WRD 2008 poster, Cebu City, Philippines

owners and the importance of rabies prevention. These are real opportunities to positively augment well-established programs, provide vital, fundamental education about rabies prevention, and potentially save lives”, says Costa.



Visitors to the WRD website are worldwide (Google Analytics Map)

The WRD Team invites you to tell us about your event by sending us an email or by filling out the online event submission form available on the WRD web site at: www.worldrabiesday.org/EN/Events/2008_World_Rabies_day_event.html

For more information on how your organization can partner with The Alliance and the WRD Campaign, or how to get involved as an individual, please contact Peter Costa, Communications Coordinator for The Alliance at: peter.costa@worldrabiesday.org.

WRD2007 funds Rabies Prevention Projects

In full support of World Rabies Day's aims to raise awareness and funds to support community level rabies prevention projects, the Student Chapters of the American Veterinary Medical Association (SCAVMA) staged events at 24 North American schools for WRD 2007 to raise resources for rabies prevention projects. The funds that they raised and donated to the initiative were matched by Veterinarians Without Borders /Vétérinaires Sans Frontières, Canada.

In response to a call for proposals from The Alliance in early 2008, 44 highly competitive proposals were received from 18 countries. The largest numbers of proposals were received from China (9), India (5), Peru (4), Brazil (4), and the Philippines (3). The topics included education, research (epidemiologic and basic), population control, animal rabies surveillance, animal vaccination and primary diagnosis and training.

The immense response within a short time period demonstrates the substantial need for rabies control in regions of the world with the highest human mortality. This clear need led to an additional contribution from an anonymous private donor, further increasing the money available for prevention projects. As a direct result of these fantastic contributions, five projects selected from our proposals by an independent panel of experts, will be funded by The Alliance in 2008. In **Peru** - participative outreach for preventing vampire bat bites will be provided to school children in Aguaruna-Huambisa; in **Guatemala** - education in support of rabies control; in **Vietnam** - rabies education for school children; in **Kenya** - a community based public awareness program for rabies control; and in **China** - a picture poster on rabies control will be developed and distributed in rural areas. It is hoped that progress reports from these projects will both demonstrate their value locally and educate The Alliance's supporters worldwide, thus attracting further funding for rabies prevention.

The total number and diversity of responses reflects not only a long neglected need for greater support for rabies prevention and control, but also the desire of organisations worldwide to work towards Making Rabies History. Although it is not able to fund all of these projects, The Alliance is proud to embrace these opportunities and would like to thank everyone who made the first call for proposals a great success, especially the fundraisers and donors, our independent expert reviewers (Dr Enid Stiles, Dr George Beran, Dr Robert Dedmon, and Mike Altemeier) and Dr Cathy Hanlon from Kansas State University who co-ordinated the project. More information about these projects will be available shortly on The Alliance's web site (www.rabiescontrol.net).

Contributed by Peter Costa, Communications Coordinator for The Alliance, peter.costa@worldrabiesday.org



WRD Symposium at Tuskegee University



A WRD Symposium will be held at Tuskegee University, in Alabama, USA on Saturday, October 18th, 2008, bringing together veterinary students, faculty, and practicing veterinarians to focus on rabies prevention at the global, national, state and local levels. Tuskegee University won the honor to host this symposium after the largest portion of their student body (56%) participated in their WRD event last year (pictured); beating 23 other North American Colleges of Veterinary Medicine.



Information and registration information can be found at:
www.worldrabiesday.org/EN/Events/Syposium-Tuskegee-University.html

GAVI Alliance approves new vaccine strategy including rabies

On 25 June 2008, the board of the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation, the GAVI Alliance, approved a plan that will prioritize their support of new and underused vaccines to fight deadly disease in the developing world. The strategy will consider future support against cervical cancer, cholera, typhoid, meningitis A, rabies, Japanese encephalitis and rubella.



"Since GAVI began in 2000, we have increased access to immunisation for 176 million children, resulting in an estimated 2.9 million lives saved" said Julian Lob-Levyt, Executive Secretary of the GAVI Alliance. "This strategy will attack some of the world's major killers and gives us a new challenge in our efforts to provide good health to the world's most vulnerable people." Over the coming months, the GAVI Alliance, which already offers countries support for the delivery of vaccines against hepatitis B, Hib, yellow fever, rotavirus and pneumococcal disease, will assess the remaining priority vaccines relative to country demand as well as resource and vaccine availability. The board will meet later this year to take decisions on GAVI's financial commitment and implementation of the strategy.

Based on a list of priority diseases identified by the World Health Organization (WHO), the strategy is the result of a detailed review of candidate diseases and expected future vaccines, including one against malaria. It was devised based upon the input of an expert independent review committee and takes into account the unprecedented number of new vaccines that will become available to developing countries over the next decade. GAVI board members noted that The Alliance will need to rely on increased donor support in order to implement the new strategy, but said they expected the high success of recent vaccination efforts will continue to make immunisation an attractive investment for funds.

Abstracted from a press statement available on the GAVI Alliance website, www.gavialliance.org where there is also detailed information on the new strategy and summary and analysis reports specifically on rabies vaccination.

Elimination of Rabies in ASEAN Plus Three Countries by 2020

In recent years, Vietnam, China, Laos, Cambodia and Thailand have faced a rapid increase in rabies cases. In Vietnam from 2000 to 2005, a total of 309 human cases were reported, averaging 60 human cases each year, yet 125 human cases were reported by 2007, mostly from 5 Provinces. In China only 343 human cases were reported in 1999, while over 2,000 cases have been reported annually since 2003. This may be the result of efforts being focused on other emerging infectious diseases such as Avian Influenza, SARS etc. at national and global levels. On the other hand, rabies prevention programs achieved remarkable results in reducing cases and deaths from rabies and this is leading to improper vigilance by relevant institutions within the region. Sharing information and experience, cross-border and intersectoral collaboration in developing a regional strategy will be key to improving the situation among Asian countries.

A Workshop on Strengthening Cooperation and Information Sharing on Rabies among ASEAN Plus Three Countries aimed to share experiences, best practices and lessons learned on rabies prevention and control and was held on 23-25 April 2008 in Halong, Viet Nam. The workshop was organized by the National Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology, Ministry of Health of Viet Nam under the ASEAN Plus Three Emerging Infectious Diseases Programme of the ASEAN Secretariat and funded by AusAID of the Australian Government.



Australian Government

AusAID

Experts and programme managers from ASEAN Member States, Plus Three Countries (China, Japan, Republic of Korea), international organizations from the human health and veterinary sectors, and experts from the World Health Organization, World Organization for Animal Health, Veterinarians Without Borders, World Society for the Protection of Animals and Institut Pasteur presented at the workshop and put forward a set of strategies in a resolution for the elimination of rabies in ASEAN Plus Three Countries by 2020.

Rabies is a neglected and under-reported disease that kills at least 30,000 people in Asia annually and at least 40% of these deaths are among children less than 15 years of age. Experts highlighted the need for political commitment and action at the highest level of all ASEAN Plus Three Countries to consider rabies as one of the priorities needing resources for human and animal health services.

Some of the recommendations on policy development, surveillance, prevention and control of rabies in animals and humans, information, education and communication, capacity-building, integration and coordination of efforts and partnerships were underlined. The workshop also highlighted the development and implementation of a multi-sector approach to rabies prevention, control and elimination in national programmes as well as the need for these programmes to support community-based approaches.

This piece was contributed by Dr. Ma. Luningning Villa, ASEAN Plus Three EID Programme, ASEAN Secretariat and Dr. Nguyen Thi Hong Hanh, Deputy Director, National Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology, Viet Nam. The full text of the resolution and presentations are available at www.aseanplus3-eid.info/newsread.php?nid=13&gid=102

Sarah Cleaveland receives Award

Dr Sarah Cleaveland, a founding director of The Alliance has been awarded the Trevor Blackburn Award 2008 by the British Veterinary Association. The award is in recognition of her outstanding contributions to animal and human health, wildlife conservation and animal welfare in Africa.



Sarah is a veterinary epidemiologist who has been based at the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies in the University of Edinburgh, UK for the last 10 years. In September, she will move to Glasgow University, based jointly at the Faculty of Biomedical and Life Sciences and the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine. Over the past 14 years, her research work has been centered in northern Tanzania, focusing on the epidemiology of infectious diseases at the human-wildlife-domestic animal interface, including rabies, canine distemper, bovine tuberculosis, brucellosis, and echinococcosis. Rabies has been a principal interest for many years, triggered initially by concerns about disease threats to African wild dogs in the Serengeti, but leading to a wider involvement in rabies control throughout Africa and Asia. The complementary aims of several current research projects are to provide information necessary for the development of large-scale rabies control programmes in sub-Saharan Africa that will provide benefits both to public health and wildlife conservation. The Alliance is delighted that her work and advocacy for rabies control has been recognised in this way, and sends its congratulations to her.

Upcoming Meetings

The Rabies in Asia (Pakistan Chapter) Foundation is delighted to organize the **Second RIACON on February 20-22, 2009 in Karachi, Pakistan**. The two-day scientific program will include presentations from different Asian countries on the present rabies situation, ongoing control efforts, research activities and future plans, with emphasis on the prevention of animal rabies reservoirs which is fundamental to rabies elimination in humans. For further details please contact Dr. Naseem Salahuddin, President RIA (Pakistan Chapter) naseemsal@hotmail.com, or see www.rabiesinasia.org

The 19th annual **RITA meeting** will be held from September 28 – October 3, 2008 at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Georgia, USA. Further details are available at www.rabiesintheamericas.org

The **Southern and Eastern African Rabies Group 2008 meeting** will be held in Gaborone, Botswana from 25-28 August 2008. More information is available at www.up.ac.za/searg

The editor of the ARC newsletter is Louise Taylor who can be contacted at louise.taylor@rabiescontrol.net. If you have any news items or information of interest to those wanting to reduce the

burden of suffering of rabies, then please contact Louise. For further information about rabies and The Alliance for Rabies Control see www.rabiescontrol.net.