

Resolution

Towards the Elimination of Rabies in Eurasia

The conference *Towards the Elimination of Rabies in Eurasia*, organised by the World Health Organisation for animal Health (OIE) in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the European Union (EU), and held in Paris, France, 27-30 May 2007,

CONSIDERING THAT:

1. rabies is a neglected and under-reported disease which, according to WHO kills at least 50,000 people each year, mostly in Africa and Asia, and that about 40% of these deaths are among children less than 15 years of age;
2. more than 72% of the 169 Member Countries of the OIE are developing and in-transition countries with varying scientific capacity and access to expertise for applying appropriate disease control;
3. the OIE in collaboration with WHO is committed to promoting the control of zoonoses by assisting developing and in-transition countries to apply the guidelines, recommendations and international standards of the OIE as well as the relevant recommendations of WHO;
4. good veterinary governance, which is necessary to enable compliance with relevant international guidelines, recommendations and standards, is strongly linked to capacity-building programmes and financial resources at the global, regional and national levels;
5. dogs are the main reservoir and transmitter of rabies in developing countries, and controlling rabies in dogs, including stray dogs, should therefore be the highest priority in preventing human deaths;
6. in humans, once clinical symptoms occur, rabies is almost always fatal; it can, however, be prevented in most situations by strict adherence to the WHO guidelines for post-exposure prophylaxis and if the prescribed products for post-exposure treatment of rabies in humans are readily available and accessible to patients as soon as possible. The full cost of a human post-exposure prophylaxis regimen in developing countries is from 20-100 times that of vaccinating one dog in a mass vaccination campaign. Dog rabies control and vaccination therefore remain the most cost-effective means for preventing the occurrence of human rabies;
7. rabies in wildlife remains a serious problem in the northern hemisphere and, although fox rabies has been eliminated successfully in many western European countries by oral vaccination programmes, the disease in foxes and other terrestrial species (e.g. racoon dogs) is still present and is increasing in Eurasia;
8. immunization is the method of choice for controlling and eliminating rabies in its main animal reservoirs, as reduction of the wild animal population (culling) has been shown not to be effective for controlling or eliminating the disease;
9. the application of new knowledge could contribute to the development of safer, more effective rabies vaccines, diagnostics tests and preventive and control methods;
10. the international conference, *Towards the Elimination of Rabies in Eurasia*, has provided information on the control and elimination of rabies in Eurasia and highlighted the need for strong, close partnerships among veterinary and public health authorities;

11. rabies is essentially a public health problem, with little or moderate effects on animal health and production. In most countries in which human (dog-mediated) rabies is reported, the public health sector bears most of the costs related to the presence of the disease by providing services for bite treatment and the delivery of post-exposure prophylaxis to protect victims of suspected rabid bites;
12. the principal objective of this conference was to bring together veterinarians, scientists, wildlife experts, clinicians and public health officials to share their experiences in modern rabies control, to agree on strategies for the prevention and control of the disease in reservoir animal species, and to examine the threat posed by classical rabies virus and the emerging bat lyssaviruses;

RECOMMEND THAT:

1. all governments and financial cooperative institutions consider rabies control a priority;
2. veterinary services with appropriate financial support of the public budget, including ministries of health, in all infected countries actively contribute to the goal of eliminating human rabies at the animal source;
3. good governance of veterinary services be strengthened by the active participation of all countries in Eurasia in the 'Performance, Vision and Strategy' (PVS) initiative of the OIE to enhance their capacity and ability to control major animal diseases, including zoonoses such as rabies;
4. comprehensive, sustainable national programmes for rabies elimination be designed and implemented, if necessary with the assistance of international agencies, and control and elimination strategies in neighbouring countries be harmonized until rabies has been eliminated;
5. public awareness and education on rabies be a priority and be increased by exchange of information, experience and cooperation between medical, veterinary and environmental authorities;
6. surveillance and reporting of rabies (including bat rabies) be improved globally; to this end, national authorities should maintain or establish an effective mechanism for collating, processing, analysing and disseminating data on rabies, with the technical support of international and regional organisations (OIE, WHO, EU, FAO). The OIE delegate will be strongly involved in this mechanism;
7. Diagnosis of rabies be undertaken only with the techniques specified by the OIE and WHO; thus, the 6th edition of the OIE *Terrestrial Manual* and the 4th edition of the WHO *Laboratory Techniques in Rabies* should be available to each national and sub-national laboratory involved in rabies diagnosis;
8. OIE reference laboratories and WHO collaborating centres work together for international harmonisation of laboratory methods for the diagnosis and control of vaccines;
9. exchanges of experts, twinning and training programmes be encouraged to improve diagnostic capability and vaccine quality in laboratories throughout Eurasia;
10. oral and parenteral vaccinations be strongly recommended, particularly for wildlife and canine rabies control. Massive depopulation of animals to control rabies is not recommended. Population management may be applied in collaboration with environmental authorities and in conjunction with other disease control strategies. Complementary approaches, including birth control for dogs (ABC), should also be considered.
11. rabies vaccines adhere to OIE and WHO international standards for quality, efficacy and safety guidelines; cost-efficiency be considered.
12. evaluation of vaccination campaigns in reservoir species be extended to include rabies surveillance and post-vaccination monitoring;
13. rabies prophylaxis in humans be undertaken as prescribed in currently available documents from WHO (WHO Expert Consultation on Rabies, WHO Technical Report Series, No. 931, 2005, www.who.int);

14. The OIE, WHO, FAO and EU should support the establishment of annual international rabies conferences rotating between Europe, Asia and Africa. The Conference recommends the following order: Rabies in Africa Conference (2008) followed by a Rabies in Eurasia Conference (2009) and Rabies in Asia Conference (2010).