

PRESS RELEASE

RBC cautions Rwandans about dog bites and Rabies

Background

Rabies is a global public health problem that leads to the suffering and premature deaths of thousands of people in world.

According to World Health Organization, “*Rabies is an infectious viral disease that is almost always fatal following the onset of clinical signs*”. Rabies is present on all continents but more than 95% of human deaths occur in Asia and Africa”. Dogs are the source of the vast majority of human rabies deaths, contributing up to 99% of all rabies transmissions to humans. More than 55 000 people die of rabies every year worldwide. 40% of people who are bitten by suspect rabies animals are children under 15 years of age. Every year, more than 15 million people worldwide receive a post-bite vaccination.

Status of dog bites and Rabies in Rwanda

According to the data from the Epidemic Surveillance and Response Division/RBC, a total of 413 dog bites (average of 54 dog bites per month) were recorded and one death resulted in rabies countrywide from January to August 2016.

Symptoms

The incubation period for rabies is typically 1–3 months, but may vary from 1 year. The initial symptoms of rabies are fever and often pain or an unusual or unexplained tingling, pricking or burning sensation (paraesthesia) at the bite/wound site.

Other symptoms and signs of rabies in humans may consist of the following:

Anxiety, stress, and tension, delirium, drooling, convulsions, exaggerated sensation at the bite site, excitability or combative, hallucinations, loss of feeling in an area of the body, loss of muscle function, low-grade fever, muscle spasms, numbness and tingling, pain at the site of the

biter, restlessness, insomnia, swallowing difficulty (drinking causes throat spasms and the person may become hydrophobic) and death occurs.

Prevention

Though rabies is a vaccine-preventable disease, the comprehensive prevention requires a multi-sectorial intervention and collaboration in community awareness/sensitization on their role and responsibility in domestication dog, routine dog vaccination and dog bite case management.

What the community need to know about rabies

1. Visit your veterinarian with your dog or cat on a regular basis and keep rabies vaccinations up-to-date for all dogs and cats.
2. Maintain control of your dog or cat by keeping them indoors and keeping dogs under direct supervision.
3. Call your nearest veterinarian/Police or local leader to remove all stray animals (dogs and cats) from your neighborhood since these animals may be unvaccinated or ill.
4. Wash the wound with clean water with soap for 15 minutes immediately after a dog bites
5. Immediate consult the nearest health facility for vaccination and others medical care
6. Inform the nearest veterinarian for dog isolation

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