



RABID BYTES

The Newsletter of
The Alliance for Rabies Control

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EDITORIAL

The Alliance’s vision is a world without Rabies. The organization was founded in 2007 with a belief that it was intolerable that in the 21st century people and animals should continue to die from rabies – a disease for which the strategies and vaccines need to control it already exist. Although we launched our activities with \$600 US, I knew we could count on the support of committed individuals across the world to make the organization a reality.

In just three years, the Alliance has had a dramatic impact. Our global community has provided life saving information to an estimated 100 million people living in over 120 countries, and helped to vaccinate 3 million dogs through the World Rabies Day campaign. The Alliance is currently supporting several innovative projects which are demonstrating how we can stop rabies in its tracks in some of the most difficult parts of the world. We have also brought together all of the experts at one table and produced the first blueprint for controlling and preventing rabies.

We should all be extremely proud of our achievements – many accomplished on a shoestring! But there is so much more to do. Tens of thousands of people still die needlessly of rabies every year, and many millions more live in fear of the disease. Millions of dogs are killed or mistreated for fear

of rabies and many die horrific deaths from the disease. All of this suffering can end, and the Alliance is currently gathering the proof that together, we can be the instrument for change.

We need to build on this momentum and now ask you again to help make our vision a reality. I would like to ask every community member to consider **donating just \$6 US (or £4) a month**. With this support, we would be in a position to extend our work and start to see an end to this deadly disease.

Your energy and time, just as much as your financial contributions, have achieved tremendous results. If you are in contact with individuals or institutions that would be in a position to support our programs and initiatives, please let us know. We would be delighted to work with you to approach and engage them.

I cannot say enough how much we appreciate your support for the Alliance; it is a deep source of pride and encouragement for me to see that people across the world care passionately about the protection of children, adults, and animals from rabies.

Kind regards, Deborah J. Briggs

BLUE PAW TRUST CREATES “DOG MANAGED ZONES” IN SRI LANKA

Blue Paw Trust (BPT) is a non-profit organization in Sri Lanka, founded by a group of like minded professionals, to improve human health by creating a rabies free society and to improve the quality of our urban environments by minimizing problems caused by roaming dog populations. One aspect of the current humane dog population and rabies management project includes the establishment of “Dog Managed Zones” (DMZs) as a reasonable solution to the roaming dog population in hospitals, government offices, private company premises and schools to mitigate the nuisances and health issues created.

The Trust uses dog sterilization and vaccination, capacity building of relevant personnel, and infrastructure and educational campaigns focused on changing attitudes, increasing awareness and building the collective responsibility of communities. Our focus is to achieve sustainable impact through scientific and systematic interventions which equally balance the needs of human and animal welfare.

Stray dogs are not only a problem for Sri Lanka but for many other Asian countries, and are usually categorized as “roaming” and “community confined dogs”. **Roaming dogs** are maintained by breeding on the streets by stray dogs, abandoned dogs and owned dogs allowed to roam. **Community confined dogs** are restricted to large areas or premises and are fed and cared for by people within these compounds, where breeding happens.



A designated feeding station with bowls designed not to tip over

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WRD 2009 – MAKING A DIFFERENCE GLOBALLY



The assessment of the 2009 World Rabies Day (WRD) campaign has again shown remarkable results. At least 300 events were held in 105 countries, involving 775,000 people. Early reports indicate that an estimated 20 million people were educated through seminars, public service announcements and mass media and vaccination clinics held in conjunction with WRD observances helped vaccinate 1.3 million dogs.

The WRD web site continues to be the top resource for global rabies education materials, and we are now harnessing the power of social networks such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube channels to provide Campaign news and updates. We have just released on You Tube, a compelling short video of facts and images from this WRD2009 which can be seen [here](#). With these diverse types of outreach we have established a new global network of half a million rabies advocates and enabled a very participatory approach to rabies control.

Our partnerships continued to provide vital funding and infrastructure help to some of our larger outreach projects. With The Humane Society of the United States Youth, educational articles reached 35,000 classrooms in 2009 and helped educate approximately 1 million children. WRD outreach packages were mailed to 10,000 veterinary clinics. This year the European Commission kicked-off their annual Veterinary Week on World Rabies Day.

Real results are being demonstrated. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) resolved to observe WRD annually and, in Thailand, events were held in all 76 provinces. For the first time, WRD events took place in Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine. Among notable in-kind support this year was a donation of over \$250,000USD of life-saving rabies biologics from Canada to Pakistan.

The WRD Coordinating Team would like to thank all of the partners and volunteers around the world that continue to make the Campaign a great success! Thanks to them, WRD continues to flourish; facilitating educational awareness and reigniting country-level rabies programs throughout the world.

Contributed by Peter Costa of the WRD campaign. A leaflet of the [outcomes of WRD2009](#) is available on the WRD website. You can also sign-up to receive and help disseminate our updates on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [You Tube](#). Please visit the web site to [make a donation](#) to the 2010 WRD Campaign.



DOG MANAGED ZONES ...continued from page 1

Whilst conducting our current Humane Dog population and Rabies Management project in Colombo, BPT received many complaints and requests from hospitals, private organizations, government offices, hotels and schools to remove dogs from their premises as they were a nuisance and a danger to all. As an answer to this request, the DMZ was born, a reasonable and sustainable solution where humans and dogs could co-exist in harmony. The existing dogs remain within a controlled environment and are not dumped at other locations.

A DMZ is an area which is enclosed adequately and therefore restricts entry and exit of *roaming dogs. It contains a limited number of dogs that are sterilized and vaccinated against rabies and are generally healthy, thereby posing no risk to the public. The presence of these animals, due to their natural territorial behavior, helps prevent unknown roaming dogs from entering the premises.

Components of the program include: Existing dogs remaining within the zone; sterilization of all dogs within the premises and buffer zone (males and females); initial and follow up annual vaccination; feeding stations for all dogs within the zone away from public areas; proper garbage disposal and control; staff education concerning rabies control, bite prevention, feeding methods and garbage disposal; and encouragement of staff to promote this important service to free their community of rabies. A successful program results in a healthy and limited population of dogs posing little threat to humans, very little possibility of rabies or unwanted puppies and responsible staff with an awareness of and advocacy for animal welfare. After the natural reduction of the dog population within the DMZ, it becomes a "dog free zone"

Several organizations, government and private have established DMZs using the services of BPT. It is a new and accepted service, as more and more companies and organizations are coming forward requesting similar programs.

Contributed by Ashani Unamboowe of the Blue Paw Trust. Further information is available from their website, www.bluepawtrust.com and you can contact her at ashaniu@bluepawtrust.com or ashaniu@yahoo.com.



KEEP GOING HAITI!

Recently, everybody listened to news of the terrible earthquake that killed around two hundred thousands people in Haiti. This tragedy followed two major hurricanes in 2008, and decades of social crises and very high rates of poverty. However, it must also be said that in the midst of so many obstacles, Haiti has demonstrated strong will and perseverance in fighting against its challenges, including rabies.



*Vaccination in Haiti in 2007
(Photo Cristina Schneider)*

Haiti is an example of achievements in rabies control in the Americas. In 2006, Haiti reported almost 40% of the human cases transmitted by dogs in the Americas (11 of 29). In the first celebration of the World Rabies Day in 2007, a strong political commitment to fight rabies was articulated by the Ministers of Agriculture, Public Health and the Representative of the Pan American Health Organization/ World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO), followed by the formulation of an intersectoral rabies control plan for the country, and a technical cooperation project among five countries (Brazil, Canada, Cuba, Dominican Republic and Haiti) to support Haiti in rabies control. One of the major parts of this agreement was the donation of the canine rabies vaccine to Haiti by Brazil. The plan and the mass vaccination campaign was a great success – more than 500,000 animals were vaccinated, cutting the human rabies cases by two

thirds. This best practice experience was reported by Dr. Max Millian, coordinator of the rabies activities in the Ministry of Agriculture in Haiti, at the RITA 2008 conference and in a workshop with the participation of colleagues from Africa at RITA 2009 in Canada.

During 2009, rabies was a topic on the agenda of the International Affairs Ministers from Brazil and France with the participation of the PAHO's representative during a visit to Haiti. Brazil will continue to donate canine vaccines and France will donate human vaccines. Rabies was also on the agenda of a meeting between the PAHO Director and the Brazilian Ambassador in Haiti. The international effort to control Rabies in Haiti could be considered an example of "Health Diplomacy".

Before the earthquake, Haiti national authorities were undertaking a new dog vaccination campaign (with 260 thousand dogs already vaccinated). This activity had stopped in light of the tragedy, however the vaccination campaign has already restarted. This note was written in solidarity with the people of Haiti and especially our "rabies" colleagues, to share in their sorrow, and to express our belief that they will once again go through this enormous challenge and, with global support, reconstruct their country and continue the fight against rabies in the future. Keep going Haiti!

This piece was contributed by Cristina Schneider, Ottorino Cosivi and Fernando Leanes of the Pan American Health Organization.

SYMPOSIUM ON NON-SURGICAL CONTRACEPTION

The 4th International Symposium on Non-Surgical Contraceptive Methods of Pet Population Control, will be held on April 8-10, 2010, in Dallas, Texas, U.S. [The Alliance for Contraception in Cats & Dogs \(ACC&D\)](#) is proud to present this event in partnership with the [Found Animals Foundation](#), sponsor of the Michelson Prize and Grants in Reproductive Biology.



The 4th International Symposium offers a one-of-a-kind opportunity to those interested in the development and use of non-surgical methods of controlling cat and dog populations worldwide. The symposium will bring together scientists, veterinarians, animal welfare professionals, public health advocates, pharmaceutical industry representatives, and funders from the U.S. and abroad.

The symposium will feature 40 speakers and will include a keynote presentation from Dr. Charles Rupprecht, Chief of the Rabies Program at the Centers for Disease Control. He'll share how he sees non-surgical sterilization as a key element of work to eliminate rabies, a deadly but entirely preventable disease, and how population control is part of the One World Health initiative.

Dr. G. Robert Weedon, Veterinary Outreach Coordinator for the the Alliance for Rabies Control and Vice-Chairman of the Alliance for Contraception in Cats & Dogs, writes, "This event is a must for veterinarians, public health officials and others looking for more efficient and effective methods for controlling dog or cat populations in order to prevent spread of rabies and other zoonotic diseases." Dr. Weedon is currently involved on a rabies control project in the Philippines which proposes to combine the use of rabies vaccine with population control by means of a chemical sterilant. A full-day symposium session on April 10 will provide comprehensive training on the use of chemical sterilants in male dogs.

Please visit www.acc-d.org/4thSymposium for more information or to register today!



Meca rests with his owner, Felipa, after being vaccinated for rabies and chemically castrated through an ACC&D-sponsored Veterinarians Without Borders-Canada project in Todos Santos, Guatemala.

Photo: Vets without Borders-Canada

Contributed by Karen Green of the ACC&D

RABIES CONTINUES TO PENETRATE INTO NORTHERN ISRAEL

The Veterinary Authorities in Israel are alarmed about the sharp rise in the number of rabies cases among animals – 58 cases in 2009 and already 4 have been confirmed in January 2010. 74% of these cases were recorded in dogs (n=36) and jackals (n=10), whereas the rest were diagnosed in 9 ruminants, 3 foxes, 1 donkey, 1 stone marten and 1 cat. This compares with only 12 cases during 2008, 15 cases in 2007 and 9 cases in 2006. Between 1979 and 2000, foxes constituted the main reservoir of rabies in Israel, but the implementation of the fox-targeted oral vaccination programme, initiated on a limited scale in 1998 and then more comprehensively through 2003, led to a dramatic decrease in the number of confirmed rabies cases. The disease practically disappeared from almost all of Israel.



Door-to-door rabies vaccination by an Israeli Veterinary Services officer in a village, January 2010. Photo: Dr Hamad Fares, Rosh Pina, District Veterinary Officer, Israel

However, a new outbreak started in the north-east region of Israel in 2005, with a few cases sporadically appearing along the Syrian border. During 2005-2009, stray dogs emerged as the main animal reservoir in northern Israel while lower numbers of rabies cases were confirmed in other animals. Biological and molecular characterization of rabies isolates from infected foxes and dogs showed that they differed, suggesting 2 distinct and separate lineages. The analysis of the G-L intergenic region sequences of Turkish, Jordanian, southern Lebanese and north-eastern Israeli rabies virus isolates

indicated that dog-mediated rabies showed a close relationship to Turkish dog rabies. It therefore appears that the canine rabies outbreaks in Israel resulted from north to south movement of infected animals in the eastern Mediterranean area. From 1995 to 2002, 14 human rabies cases were reported in Lebanon and a dog bite was identified as the source of exposure in the majority of cases. Twenty-four fatal human cases of rabies occurred in Syria between 1997 and 2002. The last 3 human cases in Israel were confirmed in 1996 -1997.

The transition from fox-mediated rabies to dog-mediated rabies in the northern Israel area is of great concern to public health officials because of the close contact between dogs and man. Measures undertaken by the Israeli Veterinary Authorities include intensification of supervision of compulsory pet dog vaccination, increased frequency and density of oral vaccine bait distribution in affected areas and initiation of cooperation with Jordan in a joint wildlife oral rabies vaccination project in the Jordan Valley. A new public awareness campaign has also emphasized the importance of annual dog vaccination and reporting to the proper medical authorities of any close physical contact with suspect animals, particularly wildlife.

*Contributed by Dr Boris Yakobson, Director of the Kimron Veterinary Institute (KVI) in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, together with colleagues Dr D. David, Acting Head of the Rabies laboratory KVI, and Dr R. King, Wildlife veterinarian, Science & Conservation Div., Nature and Parks Authority, Israel. Online information on rabies incidence in Israel can be found [here](#) and a paper entitled 'Emergence of dog rabies in the northern region of Israel' was published by David et al. in *Epidemiol. Infect.* (2009) Vol137, p544-548.*



“Rainbow, Evening Sun and Four Cats on the Pacolet River” by Vickie Jo Franks, a folk artist from North Carolina, USA. She uses her attractive collages made from recycled materials to promote messages about caring for the environment and the animals around us, including rabies prevention. In the rural area where she grew up there were few veterinary hospitals and animals rarely received vaccinations or spay/neuter care, and she remembers as a child seeing animals that must have been rabid. A lifelong lover of nature, she feels that the destruction of areas for wildlife has sent wild animals into areas where it is more important than ever to provide pets with rabies vaccinations and have them spayed or neutered. “Whatever we have done or not done in the past it is time to take care of pets and make sure our pets do not become part of a more serious problem” she says.

Her recent exhibit “A Southern Voice and Messages” was held in January at Gaston County Library in Gastonia, North Carolina, and a newspaper article about it is [here](#). Her website is www.vickiejofolk.com

RABIES AWARENESS IN ASIA

According to WHO estimation, endemic canine rabies claims 31,000 human lives annually in Asia, mostly children. Many human rabies deaths could be avoided if the population was aware of appropriate post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), which includes immediate wound washing with soap and water, rabies immunoglobulin infiltration and a complete course of vaccination following an animal bite. Unfortunately, populations at-risk are not well-informed of the risk of rabies and what to do in the event of an animal bite.

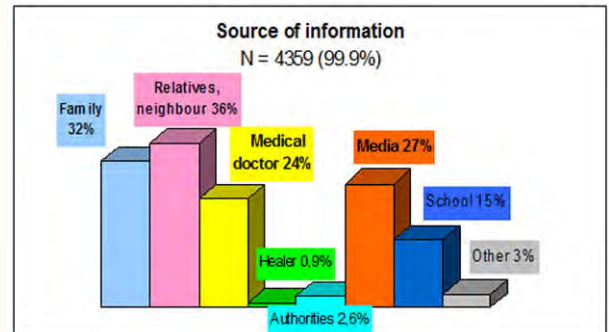
In order to identify the main gaps regarding knowledge on anti-rabies prophylaxis following an animal bite and to better define the most urgent actions to be undertaken, the Asian Rabies Expert Bureau (AREB, www.areb.info) conducted a multicentre, multi-country survey of patients seeking rabies PEP in rabies prevention centers from 1 July 2007 to 31 January 2008. The survey included more than 4,300 subjects from eight Asian countries (Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Thailand). Data were collected regarding the patient, previous rabies exposures, the present wound, rabies exposure management, and rabies awareness.

One third of patients did not know about rabies before being bitten. The main sources of information are: relatives/neighbor, family, media, and doctor. School was mentioned only by 15% of patients (see figure). Almost one third of patients had not received any local treatment of wounds before attending the rabies center. Among those who took care of their wound, only 70% mentioned washing with soap/detergent and water. Only half of the patients had met with a doctor and 10% of patients preferred to be consulted by traditional healer.

Although 95% of patients were living at a distance that required less than 5 hours of travel to the rabies prevention centre, less than one-third visited the rabies centre within 6 hours of exposure. Two major issues were identified where specific information to the population could make a difference: the necessity of appropriate wound care, and the importance of seeking advice from the nearest rabies prevention centre as soon as possible. The survey confirmed the urgent need to increase rabies awareness in populations exposed to the daily risk of contracting rabies, so that they seek appropriate care without delay in case of an animal bite.

To reduce the rabies disease burden, raising rabies awareness should be prioritized. The involvement of the Ministries of Health and Education is crucial for the success of rabies educational programmes. The development of communication tools and initiatives, carrying out rabies awareness campaigns in schools, and active involvement in the World Rabies Day and every major rabies initiative or programme are strongly recommended.

*Contributed by A Goswami, A Gunasekera, F de Guzman, S Jamali, C Montalban, W Purba, B Quiambao, N Salahuddin, G Sampath, Q Tang, T Tantawichien, O Wimalaratne, A Ziauddin, and B Dodet, of the Asian Rabies Expert Bureau. The results of the survey were published in: *Vaccine*. (2008) vol26, p6344-8.*



WORLD RABIES DAY IN KURDISTAN-IRAQ

For the first time in its history, Iraq observed "World Rabies Day" with an event which took place on September 29th, 2009 in the city of Duhok in the Kurdistan Region. The activity included a seminar on the subject of rabies as an important community health disease and a serious hazard to human life. The activity was arranged and carried out by the Kurdistan organization of animal rights protection and the veterinary directorate in Duhok, and presented by Dr. Sulayman Temer (President of the Kurdistan organization of animal rights protection and Head of Dept. of Animal Health).

It is important to mention that in attendance were veterinarians from the Veterinary Directorate, physicians from the Dept. of Health, members of the University of Duhok, the College of Veterinary Medicine, the Dept. of the Environment, Farmers, and members of the Ministry of Agriculture in the Kurdistan Region.

At the end there was constructive discussion between those attending on how to reduce the incidence of this disease, how to control it and what is needed to enhance cooperation between the relevant institutions.

Contributed by Dr Sulayman Temer.

ELIMINATING HUMAN RABIES FROM SOUTH-EAST ASIA

Bad news first: rabies is 100 percent fatal! The good news is that it is also 100 preventable. And yet over 55,000 people die of this vaccine-preventable disease worldwide each year. By eliminating it from South-East Asia, the global human rabies burden would be reduced by 45 percent. So a rabies elimination programme is indeed the need of the hour.

The task is difficult; but not impossible. All countries have rabies control activities involving the government, civic societies, animal welfare and non government organisations, even though the scale of operations may differ from country to country. And yet rabies remains a neglected disease in terms of priority and political will.

Ninety-six per cent of human rabies in the region is due to dog bites, with children and the poor often at greatest risk. According to data available, children aged 5-15 years form about 40 percent of people exposed to dog bites in rabies-endemic areas. The majority of bites that occur in children go unrecognized and unreported, increasing the possibility of many children contracting and dying of undiagnosed rabies. Studies show that most patients become victims of rabies due to poverty, negligence, ignorance or inadequate primary health care services at peripheral levels.

Necessary tools and methods for control and prevention of dog and human rabies are available, and human rabies elimination has been demonstrated in Europe, America and some countries of Asia. Coordination among major stakeholders, international partnerships, political commitment and regional cooperation are major challenges, but prerequisites for human rabies elimination. Recent positive developments in South Asia and South-East Asia towards rabies elimination need to be enforced and supported through international partnerships and funding.

Political commitment, development and execution of comprehensive rabies elimination programmes and community participation are prerequisites for successful rabies elimination. A programme focused on mass vaccination of dogs and animal birth control is largely justified by the future savings in human rabies prevention. This is where dog owners, civic societies, animal welfare and non-government organizations need to play a proactive role. A concerted effort between the human and animal health sectors can achieve the goals of rabies elimination. There is a need to promote the intra-dermal rabies vaccination technique, which will improve accessibility and affordability of modern tissue culture rabies vaccines to the general public. School children in rabies endemic countries should be immunized against rabies so there is no need for rabies immunoglobulin even in severe cases.

Rabies is a trans-boundary animal disease and does not recognize national boundaries. The Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) have identified rabies as a priority zoonotic disease of public health importance and also recognized the need for a regionally coordinated rabies elimination programme. The ASEAN Secretariat has taken a bold decision to eliminate rabies by 2020; while SAARC is also trying to move towards human rabies elimination. Though many international non-government and humanitarian organizations are involved in animal birth control and rabies vaccination activities in urban areas in some countries, a strong international partnership will be needed to execute a comprehensive rabies elimination programme in the South-East Asia region. WHO has been providing technical support to member countries to launch such a programme.

The celebration of World Rabies Day every year since 2007 has contributed in advocacy, awareness and education for rabies prevention and control in countries of the region where it is endemic. Let us hope that we will be able to launch a campaign for human rabies elimination by 2020.

Contributed by Dr Gyanendra Gongal, of the WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia, Delhi, a Regional Focal Point for Zoonoses. The WHO South-East Asia Region comprises Bangladesh, Bhutan, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, India, Indonesia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Timor Leste.

WRD SYMPOSIUM AWARDED TO TUFTS

With great pleasure, the Alliance has awarded the 2010 SAVMA World Rabies Day Symposium to the Tufts University Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine. A full-day Rabies Symposium with talks from international experts will be held at Tufts University and we hope that students in their veterinary, medical, and biomedical science programs will all participate to help spread the One Health message. Tufts University won by having the highest percentage of students participate in their 2009 WRD event.

For more information go to www.worldrabiesday.org/EN/Events/Symposium.html

DR ROBERT WEEDON JOINS WRD TEAM

We are pleased to announce that G. Robert Weedon, DVM, MPH, of Wilmington, North Carolina, USA, has joined the World Rabies Day Team, accepting the position of Veterinary Outreach Coordinator. Dr. Weedon has been a Technical Advisory Committee member, and an Ambassador for the Alliance for over a year, and will now coordinate outreach efforts to veterinarians and veterinary students on a global basis.



Dr. Weedon's passion for rabies prevention started in 2006 when he was faced with the first rabid dog in more than half a century in New Hanover County, NC. "Johnny the puppy," as he became known as, potentially exposed fifty people to rabies, and became a poster-child for Weedon as well as a component of the Alliance's rabies awareness campaign. "We were all very surprised that 'Johnny' turned out to have rabies. What if we had missed the diagnosis? That got us thinking about rabies awareness and how rabies is really under the radar here." In the United States, with mandatory vaccination requirements, the incidence of rabies in both domestic animals and people has plummeted, however the threat still exists because of rabies in wildlife. "On average, one or two people die of rabies in the US, annually," Weedon goes on to say.

A graduate of Purdue University, and a practicing veterinarian for 28 years, Dr. Weedon recently retired as the senior partner of College Road Animal Hospital and Carolina Beach Animal Hospital, both in the Wilmington area. His interest in public health began almost a decade ago when, on a team from the New Hanover County Health Department, he attended the Management Academy for Public Health. He was hooked on public health from that point forward, and he went on to complete his Master of Public Health at the Gillings School of Global Public Health at the University of North Carolina. He has been an Adjunct Professor at the University of North Carolina, where he has taught "Animals in Society", and Epidemiology. He is one of the faculty advisors for the Pre-Veterinary Medical Association, a student organization that hosts rabies vaccination clinics and elementary school rabies awareness training as their community projects.

Dr. Weedon's particular interest in rabies prevention involves animal population control, predominantly using nonsurgical sterilants. He is Vice-Chairman of the Board of the Alliance for Contraception in Cats & Dogs, a non-profit organization whose mission is to expedite the successful introduction of methods to non-surgically sterilize dogs and cats and to support the distribution and promotion of these products in order to humanely control cat and dog populations worldwide. "Evidence shows that animal population control, when combined with rabies vaccination, can save human lives," Weedon says. "Imagine what we could do by combining an injectable sterilant with rabies vaccine!"

Working in the public health arena is different than clinical practice, with the focus on a population, not just the individual patient. "I have always wanted to finish my professional career making an impact on a larger segment of the population," Weedon says. "The opportunity to work on a global basis to end animal and human suffering due to rabies is exactly the kind of thing I want to do. To potentially help save the lives of thousands of people is what my view of public health is all about."

HUMAN RABIES IN THE AMAZON, PERU

The local newspaper, Perú21, has reported that at least seven young people have died of rabies in the last few weeks after being bitten by infected bats in the Amazonas region of Peru.

According to Elías Bohórquez, the Regional Director for Health in the district of Amazonas (North), the dead victims had all the symptoms of rabies: water and light phobia, body tension, excessive salivation (foaming) and spasms. However, the medical diagnosis cannot be confirmed because the native people in the region, who have their own beliefs and customs, will not allow autopsies to be performed.

"The disease can only be confirmed through analysis of the brain of the deceased. However, the people concerned have a different culture and consider it an insult to touch their dead, so they won't let us study their bodies," Bohórquez told journalists.



Vampire Bat

Continued on page 8...

WORLD RABIES DAY IN PAHO

Ministers of health from North, South, and Central America and the Caribbean celebrated World Rabies Day (WRD) with two cakes with WRD logos during the coffee break at the headquarters of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) on the first day of the 49th PAHO Directing Council Meeting. The meeting, held each year in Washington, D.C, drew ministers and other high-level delegates from PAHO's 35 member countries. Also attending were WHO Director-General Dr. Margaret Chan and PAHO Director Dr. Mirta Roses.



At this year's meeting, the ministers pledged to step up efforts to fight rabies in a joint resolution on the "Elimination of Neglected Diseases and other Poverty Related Diseases." The resolution commits the governments of the Americas to mobilize new resources, partnerships and actions aimed at the elimination of human rabies transmitted by dogs, with the goal of eliminating it by 2015. The PAHO Director addressed the importance rabies elimination during the meeting.

PAHO's elimination strategy, which was endorsed in the resolution, includes vaccinating 80 percent of the canine population in endemic areas, providing post-exposure prophylaxis for 100 percent of exposed people at risk, improving surveillance, and increasing education and raising awareness about rabies risks.



Ministers of Health from throughout the Americas were served cakes with the World Rabies Day logo (in Spanish and English) at PAHO headquarters on September 28, World Rabies Day.

Contributed by, Cristina Schneider, Fernando Leanes and Donna Eberwine, of PAHO. Further details of the [council meeting](#) and a blog article by Dr Mirta Roses written on 27th Sept 2009 entitled "[Keeping a promise: THE FIGHT TO ELIMINATE RABIES](#)" are available on the PAHO website.

HUMAN RABIES IN THE AMAZON, PERU ...continued from page 7

According to our information, the tragedy has consumed the native Kigkis community in the Amazon province of Condorcanqui where the Awajún y Wampis peoples live. It is also where a number of rabies-infected haematophagous bats have been caught.

According to experts, Haematophagous bats feed on blood. They often bite children in the head, and adults in the fingers and feet, but their victims don't feel the bat biting them because these animals act in the shelter of darkness and first deposit a liquid which numbs the body (* however, see footnote).

Another factor is that the native people live and sleep practically in the open air because of the strong heat which prevails all year round in the Amazon region. Their dwellings (raised on tree trunks and branches, and with straw roofs) do not have walls.

The health authorities in the region are having talks with the "apus" (tribal headmen) to try and set up an immunization campaign against rabies and, at the same time, to eliminate bats, whose numbers have increased considerably.

This article is a direct translation by Jane Coutts of the Alliance. The original article (in Spanish) is from the [Spanish People Daily](#), January 8th 2010 and is archived on [Promed](#).

** One of the Alliance's technical experts specialising in bat rabies notes that they have never seen any scientific evidence for an anaesthetic in vampire bat saliva. Mechanisms for explaining the general lack of pain felt by victims of vampire bat bites are that the victims are in deep sleep, and that the bats have surgically sharp teeth.*

The editor of the Alliance newsletter is Louise Taylor. If you have news items or information of interest to those working to defeat rabies, please contact her at louise.taylor@rabiescontrol.net. For further information on the Alliance's work see www.rabiescontrol.net.