

RABIES, A KILLER DISEASE

Rabies is reported to claim nearly 55 000 human lives a year in the world, with ninety-nine percent of the cases resulting from human beings being bitten by infected dogs. Rabies therefore causes more human deaths in the world than any other infectious disease, with about half of these deaths occurring in children under 15 years of age.

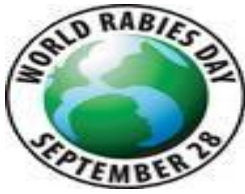
According to the National Institute for Communicable Disease (NICD), 515 cases of Rabies have been recorded in humans in South Africa since 1928 with confirmed cases of human rabies since 2005 recorded as follows: 7 in 2005, 32 in 2006, 14 in 2007 and 16 in 2008. While the numbers of human cases are small, the disease is almost invariably fatal. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that more than 3.3 billion people located in more than 100 countries across the world live at daily risk of exposure to this deadly disease.

What is Rabies?

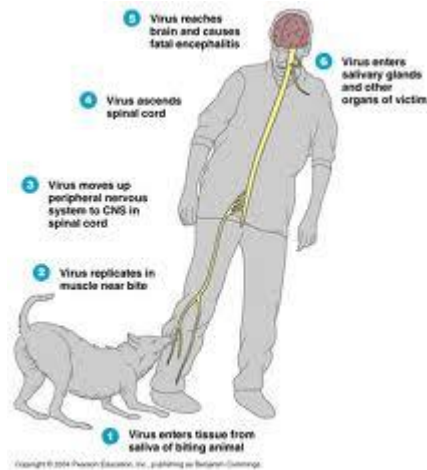


Rabies is a neurological disease of mammals that is almost fatal once the clinical signs develop. Humans are usually infected when they are bitten by an infected animal, exposed to its saliva or neurological tissue. Rabies results from infection by the rabies virus, a virus which affects the brain and causes death in all infected animals. There are different strains of the rabies virus; each strain is maintained in particular reservoir hosts. The virus that is maintained in dog populations is called canine rabies and this strain continues to be a serious problem in some areas of Africa, the Middle East, Asia and South America.





HOW THE DISEASE IS TRANSMITTED TO HUMANS?



The virus is usually spread in the, when an infected animal bites another. Less often, an animal or person is infected by contact with infectious saliva or neurological tissues, through mucus membranes or breaks in the skin. The rabies virus is not transmitted through intact skin. Dogs are the principal transmitter of rabies to humans, although cats and rarely mongooses and other wild animals play a role in the transmission of the disease.

SIGNS OF THE DISEASE IN ANIMALS



The initial signs are often nonspecific and may include restlessness, apprehension, decreased or increased appetite, and slight fever. Behavior or temperament change follows, with domesticated animals becoming unusually aggressive or wild animals becoming uncharacteristically affectionate. Progressive paralysis may follow and is characterized by inability to swallow or profuse salivation. Death usually occurs within 2 to 6 days as a result of respiratory failure.





SIGNS OF THE DISEASE IN HUMANS



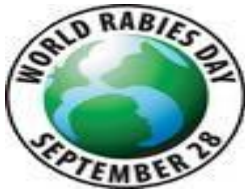
It may take a few days to several years following being bitten by an infected animal before the clinical signs become apparent. The early symptoms of the disease are nonspecific and may include signs such as fever, headache, discomfort or pain at the site of virus entry. Later in the disease progress from signs of anxiety, confusion and agitation to abnormal behavior ranging from insomnia, hypersensitivity to light, hallucinations, difficulty in swallowing, pharyngeal spasms and/or fear of water, hypersensitivity to light and convulsions. Finally paralysis predominates and within 2 to 10 days death follows.

HOW TO CONTROL RABIES?



There is no treatment once the clinical signs appear. Rabies can be prevented in domesticated animals by vaccination. Wild animals can be immunized with oral vaccines distributed in bait. Preventing animals from roaming will reduce to risk of exposure to rabid wild animals. It is very important that dogs and cats are vaccinated to reduce the risk to people. Young animals should be vaccinated twice in the first year and then once every year. The vaccine is safe and will not make your animals sick. Control of stray dogs and/or responsible dog ownership





WHAT TO DO IF YOU GET BITTEN BY A SUSPICIOUS ANIMAL?

Quickly wash the wounds well, using soap or disinfectant. Immediately consult a medical doctor or the nearest clinic. A course of injections will be administered to prevent the development of the disease.

Report all suspect cases to your nearest state veterinarian, animal health technician or the police.

DETAILS OF WHO TO CONSULT IN THE FREE STATE PROVINCE

Provincial office	-	051-4363677
Xhariep district	-	051-6830083 o 051-7130480
Motheo district	-	051-4363677 or 051-8751160
Lejweleputswa	-	057-9166724
Thabo Mofutsanyana	-	058-7141430/39/45/46
Fezile Dabi	-	016-9762006

