

Laikipia Rabies Vaccination Campaign (LRVC) 2017

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LRVC 2016: local woman in Rumuruti, Kenya.

attention, dog owners often resort to killing or poisoning dogs suspected of carrying rabies in order to prevent infection. In fact, many are unaware that the most effective method of preventing rabies is through the vaccination of dogs. These rural communities also often face the heaviest financial burdens due to rabies in terms of medical cost of post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), cost of travel to medical facilities, and loss of income. The inaccessibility of PEP and difficulties in rabies diagnosing methods often contribute to the death and suffering caused by rabies in these communities.

Ecological Impact of Rabies in Feral Dogs

Rabies elimination through vaccinations of local dogs is not only cost-effective and achievable, but also ecologically beneficial. The transmission of rabies between domesticated and wild dogs has driven wild dogs closer to extinction. This fact, in combination with the lack of evidence suggesting that wildlife maintains the rabies virus implies that the most effective measure of preventing death by rabies in feral dogs is to vaccinate domesticated dogs, especially those at high risk of exposure to the disease or of interaction with feral animals.



LRVC 2016: campaign volunteer in Laikipia, Kenya.

Last Year's Campaign & Future Goals

Last year's campaign saw a total of 4,530 dogs and cats vaccinated – more than twice the target! We were fortunate to have the cooperation of many local leaders, the Kenyan government, and university volunteers, as well as a total of almost \$13,000 in funds to run this project. This upcoming year, we plan to widen the scope of the project even further – doubling our outreach programs; intensifying research mobilization; and educating local populations about rabies prevention and treatments. Some of the challenges presented include receiving additional funds for the expanded project, organizing the volunteers and employees, and ensuring the safe handling of animals during the campaign; however, with the successes of last year's campaign, we hope to progress towards the eradication of rabies in Laikipia County and eventually all of Kenya.



Campaign poster for World Rabies Day.

The Eradication of Rabies

Rabies is incurable and fatal, but preventable. In recent years, it has become a primary focus of many organizations like the World Health Organization (WHO) in plans to eradicate certain preventable diseases by the year 2030. By vaccinating at least 70% of the dog population annually, it has been shown in regions in Latin America and Asia that the disease can be eliminated from whole communities.

Rabies in Kenya

As part of its plan to participate in this global plan, Kenya launched a national initiative in 2014 to eliminate rabies, which kills an estimated 2,000 people annually in Kenya alone. Rabies remains on the list of priority zoonotic diseases for Kenya and has been considered an endemic disease since 1912. Since then, the disease has spread, and has since been reported in every region in Kenya. Because over 98% of human rabies cases are caused by rabid dogs, much of the focus in rabies control has been targeted on protecting both dogs and humans from rabies infection, especially in Kenya, where dogs often serve important roles in the work of pastoral and village communities. In many of these areas with restricted access to medical

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