

Roles and Responsibilities

The objectives of this section are to address and provide guidelines regarding the: (1) agencies that should be involved in a dog rabies control programme and (2) responsibilities of each agency.

This section contains information on the following:

- [2.1. Which agencies should be involved in a dog rabies control programme?](#)
- [2.2. What are critical responsibilities in a dog rabies control programme and which agencies should play a role?](#)

2.1. Which agencies should be involved in a dog rabies control programme?

Rabies affects multiple sectors including human and animal (domestic and wild) health, therefore multiple sectors are responsible for rabies control. Although agencies involved in rabies prevention and control activities and their level of responsibilities vary widely across countries, the following agencies should be involved (note that terminology will also vary across countries, e.g. in some countries ministries are named departments):

Veterinary Services and Zoonoses Department of National Governments:

- ▶ The Veterinary Department/Services, usually embedded within the Ministry of Agriculture, or the Zoonoses Department of the Ministry of Health are generally the main agencies responsible for regulation of dog rabies control programs including dog vaccination campaigns and surveillance operations.
- ▶ Veterinary Services could also take responsibility for livestock rabies (most countries) and wildlife rabies (e.g. the Netherlands).
- ▶ Veterinary Services or Zoonoses Departments will also take the lead in the investigation (e.g. tracing dog-bites and the origin of infection and identification of humans and animals that may have been contacted and are at risk) and operational aspects of containing and controlling a rabies outbreak in animals. Detailed guidelines on outbreak management are provided [here](#).
- ▶ National Rabies Laboratories are generally embedded within the Ministry of Agriculture and/or Ministry of Health depending on whether animal and human samples are processed in the same laboratory or not.
- ▶ Zoosanitary border posts and checkpoints are also located under the jurisdiction of Veterinary Services and are responsible for checking health certificates and the health of animals entering the country and/or the quarantine services.

Ministry of Health:

- ▶ The Ministry of Health is responsible for prevention of rabies in humans (prophylactic and post-exposure vaccinations).
- ▶ The Ministry of Health also works together with Veterinary and Local Authorities in the investigation and control of rabies outbreaks to protect human health (e.g. surveillance of the population at risk, cases and dog-bite incidents, education of professionals, provision of advice and guidance on public health control measures, medical interventions and advice to the public).
- ▶ The Ministry of Health can take primary responsibility for dog rabies control including coordination with local authorities and procurement of vaccines (e.g. several Latin American countries) ([CASE STUDY COLOMBIA](#)) given that the public health benefits that result from reduced human exposures and subsequent reduced demand for costly human rabies vaccine can be significant.
- ▶ Specialized services within the Ministry of Health can play an important role in community sensitization and raising awareness ([CASE STUDY PHILIPPINES](#)).

Ministry of Animal Resources:

The Ministry of Animal Resources is responsible for livestock rabies in some countries (e.g. West Africa).

Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment/Tourism:

- ▶ The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment/Tourism has jurisdiction over wildlife rabies (surveillance and control) in some countries (e.g. several countries in Eastern and Southern Africa).
- ▶ It may play a role when problems associated with dogs present a hazard (e.g. control of free-roaming dogs in wildlife protected areas).
- ▶ It may also enforce measures to prevent dogs from accessing garbage or human sewage.

Ministry of Education:

The Ministry of Education can play a critical role in the implementation of rabies awareness programmes, especially educational initiatives targeting children, and in disseminating information about rabies prevention and control to the general public ([CASE STUDY PHILIPPINES](#)) ([CASE STUDY PUERTO RICO](#)).

Ministry of Finance:

- ▶ The Ministry of Finance can provide assistance in the development of interministerial financing mechanisms to support sustainable rabies control programmes.
- ▶ Customs and Border Control has the responsibility of monitoring the importation of animals and implementing quarantine services, when required.

Ministry of Defence/Interior (or Ministry of Home Affairs):

- ▶ The Ministry of Defence has jurisdiction over issues (policing and penalties) related to animal protection (e.g. prevention of cruelty to animals).
- ▶ Police officers may also have a role in implementing road checks to limit/monitor animal movements.
- ▶ In some countries the Ministry of Defence has also duties under the Animal Health Act and under Rabies (Control) Orders with respect to reporting the presence or suspected presence of rabies and enforcing the provisions of the Order.
- ▶ The Ministry of Defence may also be in charge of penalties if the period of observation of a suspected rabid dog is not accepted by the owner.

Ministry of Justice:

The Ministry of Justice can provide legal assistance and advice on laws, by-laws and regulations relevant to rabies control strategies.

Ministry of Labour:

In some countries (e.g. The Netherlands) the Ministry of Labour will have responsibility for the health and safety of occupations at increased risk of rabies infection.

Local Authority (County Council, District Council, Municipalities):

- ▶ Local government authorities usually have responsibility for implementation of rabies prevention and control activities at the local level with advice from higher levels (national or state/provincial) authority and in collaboration with private sector veterinarians and non-governmental organizations.
- ▶ In many countries local government authorities are responsible for the development and enforcement of legislation relating to dog ownership (e.g. registration, microchipping, vaccination, leash laws, abandonment), and dog population management (e.g. seizure and detention, vaccination, reclaiming, re-homing or culling and disposal of unclaimed animals, neutering services, and sanitation).

Institutions:

Academic and research Institutions (e.g. Faculties of Veterinary Medicine and Medicine) often have the infrastructure and expertise to conduct operational research and disseminate findings, provide technical advice on design and implementation of rabies control strategies and provide training to

human and animal health professionals. Scientific publications or reports generated by such institutions can be used to validate rabies control activities.

Non-governmental organizations:

Local, national and international non-governmental organizations can have a critical role in helping obtain resources, raise public awareness, educate the public in responsible pet ownership and dog population management, and design and implement dog rabies control programmes. Read [more](#) about the work of some of these organizations.

Private sector:

- ▶ Private veterinarians and medical practitioners have key responsibilities for providing advice to dog owners/handlers and bite victims.
- ▶ They have an active role in rabies surveillance and in the implementation of rabies control programmes.
- ▶ Private veterinary practitioners can have an important role in ensuring vaccination of owned dogs and in the education of dog owners and their families.

Media:

Properly briefed, the media can prove a valuable source of information to the public (e.g. in case of an outbreak or to increase general awareness). All information disseminated should be approved by the Veterinary and Public Health Services to ensure correctness and consistency.

Interministerial committee or Task Force:

- ▶ The establishment of a coordinating body (either an interministerial committee or Task Force) to overcome the problem of coordinating activities located in separate ministries with divided responsibilities should be established. The Interministerial Task Force should be responsible for orchestrating the implementation of the different components of the National rabies prevention and control program ([CASE STUDY TANZANIA](#)).
- ▶ In exceptional circumstances (e.g. introduction of disease into rabies-free areas), expert commissions, including representatives from various ministries (e.g. Ministries of Agriculture and Health), could be established.
- ▶ In general, interministerial collaborations are essential for successful implementation of many aspects of a National canine rabies control program ([CASE STUDY PHILIPPINES](#)) ([CASE STUDY PUERTO RICO](#)) ([CASE STUDY COLOMBIA](#)) ([CASE STUDY THAILAND](#))

International bodies:

[World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#), [World Organization for Animal Health \(OIE\)](#), [Food and Agriculture Organization \(FAO\)](#), [Pan American Health Organization \(PAHO\)](#) and worldwide veterinary associations provide guidelines for the provision and supply of appropriate biologicals and can help support national and regional planning of rabies control programmes. These organizations can also provide independent oversight of projects.

2.2. What are critical responsibilities in a dog rabies control programme and which agencies should play a role?

Click below to view a summary table that will provide you with a list of activities and agencies responsible for them.