

3.2. Legislation

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3.2.1. What is the role of legislation in the fight against rabies?

In most countries, several laws and by-laws have relevance for rabies control and can provide valuable support for implementing effective programs. For instance, it is important that the Veterinary Services have the authority to enter private and public premises and other establishments where animals are located. The legislation should provide them with the necessary authority to carry out actions needed for early detection, reporting and rapid and effective management of rabies. Such actions include the capacity to: (1) seize animals, vaccinate, quarantine (including diagnostic testing and other procedures); (2) control animals at frontiers; and (3) require the destruction and safe disposal of animals considered to pose a risk of rabies transmission to public health. At the municipality level a variety of laws can assist in prevention and control of rabies, as described [here](#).

3.2.2. What is the difference between reporting and notification?

Reporting is the act of a clinician/veterinarian/laboratory informing the local health/veterinary agency of a suspected or confirmed case of a disease. Notification is the process of the local health/veterinary agency informing the national health/veterinary agency.

3.2.3. Why does rabies need to be a notifiable disease?

Diseases like rabies are highly infectious and severe, and affect multiple sectors (domestic animals, wildlife conservation, public health and livestock economies), therefore it is important to make sure they do not spread. When rabies is notifiable in a country, surveillance data can be collected. Better estimates of the number of cases can therefore be made, ensuring a more accurate evaluation of the rabies burden in an area. Rabies needs to be reported so that infected animals can be swiftly identified, isolated and removed reducing the risk of animals and humans across the country contracting the disease. In the case of farm animals this makes individual farms more profitable and keeps compensation costs low (in countries where applicable). Surveillance data will also provide public health professionals with critical information to make informed decisions about saving human lives. For instance, in a number of countries notification is used by health authorities to investigate possible exposures and organize post-exposure prophylaxis, quarantine and other disease containment measures. Rabies reporting and notification are also of value for the rapid identification of foci and the implementation of control measures if needed. Surveillance of human and animal cases includes reporting of suspect cases (based on the history and clinical symptoms/signs) as well as collection of samples for laboratory confirmation. Surveillance measures should also include reporting of human exposures by suspect rabid animals and post-exposure doses administered. Click [here](#) for more information on rabies surveillance strategies.

3.2.4. Which factors are important in deciding whether a disease is notifiable?

The severity of the disease and risk to human health are important factors. Rabies has the highest case fatality rate of any diseases known to infect humans: it is virtually 100% fatal once symptoms are present. Another factor is disease prevention and control. Human rabies is preventable and dog rabies is controllable. When a disease becomes notifiable it is subject to particular laws and controls, and financial resources should be allocated to its prevention/control/elimination.

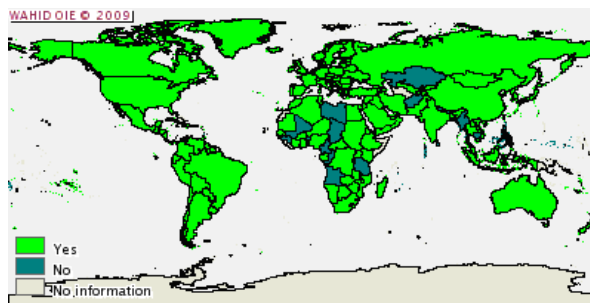
3.2.5. Is/should rabies in humans be a notifiable disease in my country?

Yes. Functional diagnostic services are a precondition for notification of human rabies and human rabies cases should be systematically investigated to identify contacts. All medical practitioners should be aware of the list of nationally or sub-nationally notifiable diseases that infect humans. The local (e.g. at the district level) or national public health authorities can provide more detailed information.

3.2.6. Is/should rabies in animals be a notifiable disease in my country?

Yes. All veterinary practitioners should be aware of the list of nationally or sub-nationally notifiable diseases that infect animals, of particular public health importance or diseases that are transmitted from animals to humans, such as rabies. The local (e.g. at the district level) or national veterinary services can provide more detailed information. If an animal rabies case is suspected or confirmed, in most countries the public health authorities (alternatively the next level) must be notified immediately. At the international level, rabies is an OIE [1] listed disease. Countries that are

members of the OIE are therefore recommended to regularly report on the rabies situation, including disease control measures.



Map of countries where rabies is a notifiable disease in the national veterinary legislation (2009)

Maps and information on whether rabies is a notifiable disease at the [national level](#) and for which animal species rabies is notifiable by national legislation are available. For trade purposes, it is crucial to know for which species notification and control measures are required by the national legislation.

Country	Species	Notifiable
country X	Cattle	✓
	Buffaloes	
	Dogs	✓
	Goats	
	Cervidae	
	Camelidae	
	Equidae	
	Cats	✓
	Hares / rabbits	
	Sheep / goats	
	Sheep	
	Swine	
	Wild species	

Example of a single country and species-specific legislation for compulsory notification of rabies

National veterinary services should aim at official notification of rabies occurrence to the international level (OIE and regional organisations) for both domestic and wild animals. Countries are strongly encouraged to notify all rabies outbreaks, in particular dog rabies as dog rabies is the source of infection for the majority of human rabies cases. The frequency of notification depends on the epidemiological situation of rabies in the country. OIE recommend that countries submit 6-monthly reports on their sanitary situation for all OIE listed diseases for both domestic and wild animals. If rabies is present in a country in domestic and wild animals or wildlife only, all animal rabies cases should be included in these reports. However, immediate notification may be triggered by unusual epidemiological events such as the occurrence of a new genotype, marked increase in incidence, marked changes in clinical signs/virulence, and spill-over into a species or area not formerly affected. Similarly, in a country where rabies is generally absent (rabies-free or only a few episodes) every new outbreak not connected to a former one should be notified immediately. Read [here](#) about provisions on notification obligations of OIE Members.

[1] World Organization for Animal Health

3.2.7. How do I notify a rabies human case?

The board of health, upon receiving a report of a suspect or confirmed human case of rabies, should immediately report to the Ministry of Health. The notification should be made verbally and data pertaining to each human case should be reported by any other method specified by the ministry within 24 hours of notification.

3.2.8. Are/should animal-bite injuries be notifiable?

Notification of animal-bite injuries involving the collection and analysis of bite related data for all centrally reported human exposures should be encouraged. In many situations the accurate investigation of human bites by suspect rabid animals (post-bite clinical examination and observation for at least 10 days) and laboratory confirmation will be impractical. However, reports of human exposures by suspect rabid animals, including information on bite victims, animal characteristics (e.g. species, owned or unowned), bite characteristics, type of exposure and treatment provided, should be systematically recorded by the clinic, and reported and notified to local and national public health authorities. An increase in the number of bites by suspect rabid animals in a region can be indicative of an increased risk of rabies circulating in a population. Similarly, a decrease of reported cases can be expected as a consequence of a successful rabies control programme.



Photo courtesy of Serengeti Carnivore Disease Project

3.2.9. How do I make rabies a notifiable disease in my country?

Procedures for adoption of (public and animal health) legislation vary considerably from country to country. Depending on the political and administrative organization of a country, its legislation on notifiable diseases (both public and animal health) might apply nationwide or only to certain parts of the country.

► **Rabies in humans** – Human rabies must be notifiable under federal health regulations applied by the Ministry of Health, as explained in chapter 4 of the WHO [1] Guidelines for Dog Rabies Control, available [here](#).

► **Rabies in domestic animals** - In the establishment of legislation for compulsory notification of rabies both the Ministries of Health and Agriculture are usually involved, in some cases with specialized advice from interministerial zoonosis committees. The political commitment to create or adjust legislation on rabies could be strengthened by pressure from the general public, media attention, human and animal health sectors, but also local governments (e.g. particularly affected by dog rabies), Ministry of Environment (e.g. wildlife conservation aspects) and authorities of the

public order (e.g. police). Many regional organisations (e.g. PAHO [2], UEMOA [3] etc.) have programmes to assist countries in updating and regionally harmonizing their legislation, including legislation on rabies notification. At the international level, OIE [4] can assist its member states to revise and adjust veterinary legislation through the evaluation of the performance of veterinary services, gap analysis and the OIE international standards, available [here](#). You can also read [here](#) about the WHO guidelines for planning, organization and management of veterinary public health programmes.

[1] World Health Organization

[2] Pan American Health Organization

[3] West African Economic and Monetary Union

[4] World Organization for Animal Health

3.2.10. How is the legislation to support rabies control elaborated and implemented?

Veterinary legislation is very variable amongst countries and implementation depends on good veterinary governance. Click [here](#) for general guidelines on veterinary legislation.

3.2.11. What laws and by-laws may be useful in ensuring a successful dog rabies control programme?

Laws and regulations relevant to dog rabies control programmes may include responsible dog ownership (including mandatory registration and identification, and vaccination requirements), control/removal of unowned dogs, control of dog movements/relocations, tie-up orders, regulations to control rubbish disposal and disposal of waste at facilities that may produce offal (e.g. slaughter houses, fisheries and dairy farms), abandonment legislation and dog culling. In many countries some of these laws exist, but they may not be complied with. Successful enforcement can be achieved through education about legislation at all levels (from law enforcement bodies to relevant professionals and the general public who need to be aware of laws in order to comply).



Photo courtesy of Serengeti Carnivore Disease Project

3.2.12. What laws and recommendations are available for dog importation?

Veterinary Services and, depending on the country, Customs Services have a key role in preventing introduction of rabies into rabies free areas or into a rabies free country. Any country should have legislation specifying the requirements for live dog importation. General recommendations on safe dog importation are described in the provisions on trade with dogs available [here](#). Model veterinary

certificates provided by the veterinary authority of the exporting country for importation of dogs and cats, in particular from rabies affected countries, are available [here](#).

3.2.13. What laws and recommendations are available for dog identification and registry?

Veterinary authorities, along with other relevant governmental agencies and in consultation with stakeholders, may establish a legal framework for the implementation and enforcement of a dog identification system, at individual dog level or at the municipality level. The structure of this framework will vary from country to country and the rabies epidemiological situation (e.g. planning, starting, ongoing or achieved rabies elimination programmes). Each country should design a programme in accordance with the scope and relevant criteria to ensure that the desired dog registry or traceability can be achieved. Dog identification may serve to distinguish between vaccinated and non-vaccinated populations or animals, trace dog owners in case of a biting incident or re-trace a notoriously free-roaming dog. Animal identification, traceability and movement should be under the responsibility of the Veterinary Services.

The legal framework for dog identification should address:

- ▶ Desired outcomes and scope.
- ▶ Obligations of the veterinary authority and other parties (municipalities, police, owners).
- ▶ Organizational arrangements and the choice of technologies and methods used for dog identification.
- ▶ Management of dog movement within the country and between countries, seasonal restrictions etc.
- ▶ Confidentiality of data on dogs and owners (i.e. who has access to the data).
- ▶ Checking, verification, inspection of dog identification and possible penalties.
- ▶ Funding mechanisms and arrangements to support a pilot project on dog identification, where relevant.

3.2.14. Is dog vaccination compulsory?

In some countries rabies vaccination and individual dog registration and identification are mandatory. Depending on the circumstances, changes to legislation regarding rabies vaccination should be considered, keeping in mind that these legislative changes are often slow and difficult to enforce.



Photo courtesy of Lusaka Animal Welfare Society and University of Lusaka Veterinary Department

3.2.15. What emergency orders might apply in the case of unexpected outbreaks?

Emergency rings vaccinations and registration and marking of unvaccinated animals. More information is available [here](#).