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**World Veterinary Association  
Position regarding Rabies**

Background Statement:

RABIES is an acute viral infection that is almost always fatal. This virus infects all mammalian species, including humans. It is zoonotic by definition, in that it is transmitted to humans from animals. The risk to humans comes from exposure to saliva or contact with nerve or brain tissues of infected wild and domestic animals through bite wounds, or animal saliva contamination of fresh lacerations or mucous membranes. It is estimated that there are between 40,000 and 70,000 human deaths around the world, every year, caused by the rabies virus.

Position Statement:

The World Veterinary Association supports the view that RABIES is an entirely preventable disease and that veterinarians have a key role to play in eliminating this risk to human health, and animal health and welfare.

- We encourage the establishment of an effective barrier of rabies-immunized animals between human and wildlife populations by instituting effective vaccination programs for dogs and cats.
- We encourage effective neutering programs for domestic pets and roaming dogs and cats as a means to reduce undesirable over population of animals that could serve as reservoirs for rabies.
- We encourage all countries to operate an effective disease surveillance system and implement regulatory measures for the prevention and control of rabies including effective procedures for importation into free countries or areas
- Mass vaccination campaigns rather than depopulation campaigns should be a long-term goal for rabies control. Humane culling should be used only as a last resort in areas where rabies disease is a significant risk.
- We believe there are situations where rabies virus immunization must extend to domestic livestock.

- Where a wildlife species is an active reservoir of rabies virus and there is a known and effective oral-vaccine system, we encourage the use of oral-rabies virus vaccination programs to eradicate that rabies reservoir. Oral rabies virus vaccination can also be effective to protect feral dog and cat populations from rabies – if it was not so expensive. WVA encourages the development of inexpensive and effective oral-vaccine systems for roaming dog and cat populations.

Veterinarians should have an active and key role in educating the public about the risk of this viral disease. This includes distribution of readily accessible information on the prevention of personal exposure to rabid animals.

As front line workers in the animal health field, the WVA believes that veterinarians and veterinary para-professionals are potentially at a higher risk of exposure to rabies virus and thus should be given priority to be recipients of personal rabies virus immunization, especially in areas where the disease has a high prevalence.