Rabies is a neglected and under reported viral disease that causes suffering and death in humans and animals throughout the world. This disease is especially important in regions with emerging economies where public health measures are inadequate, few diagnostic facilities are available, and access to treatment is limited. Dogs, both stray unowned animals as well as free-roaming owned animals, are the primary source of transmission of rabies with over 90% of all human cases arising from dog bites and 40% of all human cases occurring in children.

The World Veterinary Association holds that rabies is a vaccine-preventable disease and is committed to eliminating dog-mediated human rabies. Long term programs for dog rabies control include vaccination, community-wide dog spay/neuter programs, as well as focused public awareness and educational programs on rabies prevention and responsible pet ownership.

Because of resource limitations, some countries resort to methods for depopulation of dogs that are not always humane. The World Veterinary Association strongly opposes such practices. Only the implementation of measures according to the internationally accepted animal welfare standards leads to sustainable control of rabies in dogs.

The World Veterinary Association is confident that long term control of this preventable disease can be achieved in a humane and effective manner for both animals and humans. The final goal of rabies elimination can be attained by working with key partners, such as national, regional, and international governmental and non-governmental organizations.