

# RABIES UPDATES IN THAILAND



## RABIES SITUATION

Thailand has always been committed to rabies elimination in line with the WHO, OIE and FAO policy, “Rabies free from South-East Asia by 2020”.

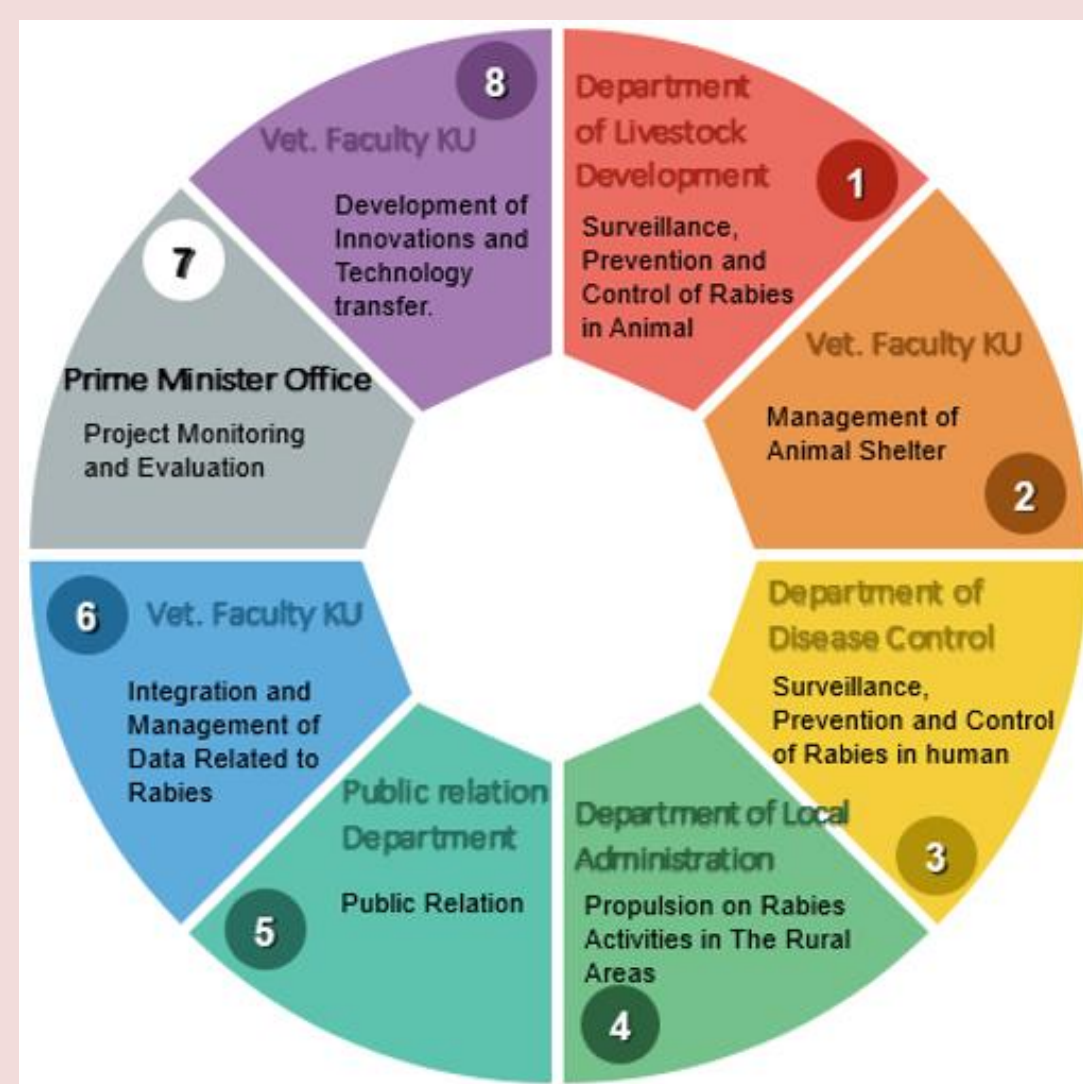
The rabies control program has been successful in reducing the annual number of human cases from few hundreds in the 1960’s to below 10 during 2011-2015. However, a reemergence of both animal and human rabies in 2016 resulted in the establishment of “The Strategies of Animals free of Rabies: Human are Safe from the Disease, 2017-2020” project under the wish of Her Royal Highness Princess Chulabhorn.



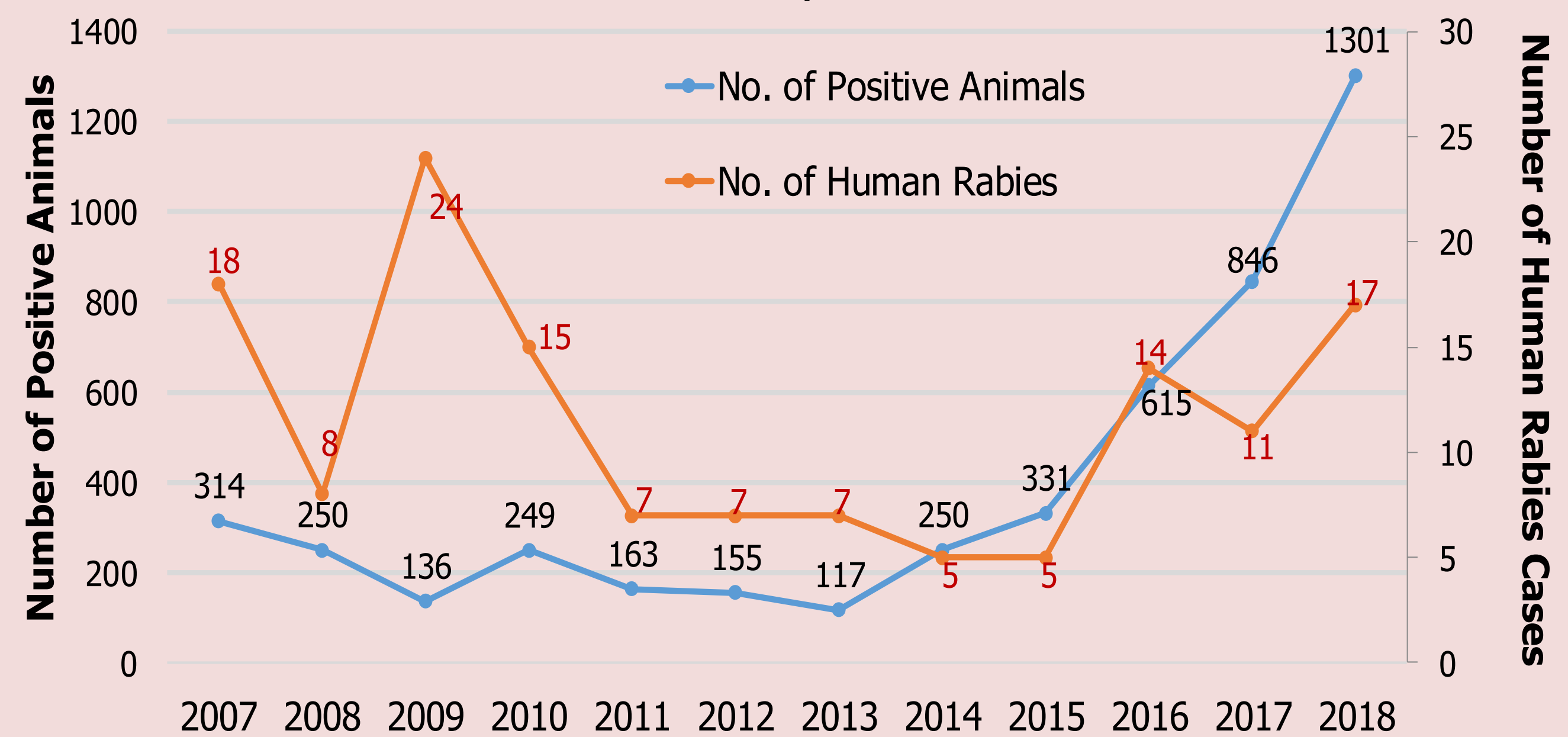
Rabies-free THAILAND  
by the year 2020



Protect humans and animals  
from rabies by using 8 strategies:



Number of Human Rabies and Rabies Positive Animals, Thailand, 2007-2018



## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

The Department of Livestock Development (DLD) has implemented the “Animal Rabies Control Law” since 1992. In collaboration with multiple government agencies and educational institutes in the royal project, the following measures have been emphasized.

- **Survey and register the dog population:** data have been shared via [www.thairabies.net](http://www.thairabies.net)
- **Ensure 80% of rabies immunization coverage** among the dog population and enhance to 100% coverage in high-risk areas with reported rabies case(s).
- **Dog population control by sterilization** in both male and female dogs: approximately 300,000 dogs and cats were sterilized in 2018.
- **Test samples collected from suspected rabid animals:** 8 DLD animal rabies diagnostic laboratories and the Queen Saovabha Memorial Institute (QSMI) are designated for rabies testing.
- **Strengthen the rabies outbreak control policy:** vaccination of dogs and cats for controlling outbreak areas with the index cases.
- **Build dog shelters:** several shelters were built for stray dogs living around the outbreak areas as well as for abandoned dogs.
- **Launch public campaigns:** educational and public relation campaigns have been carried out using various kinds of media.

The Department of Disease Control (DDC) has been responsible for clinical management of dog bites, surveillance and outbreak control. Post-exposure prophylaxis has been available nationwide in both public and private hospitals. Recently, the government also provided free pre-exposure prophylaxis to high risk populations.

## MAJOR CHALLENGES

Thailand’s rabies elimination program has made significant progress. However, several challenges exist:

- Increasing populations of dogs and cats as well as the workload on local administration offices that are responsible for animal rabies vaccination is of concern.
- Maintaining high coverage of rabies vaccination in dogs and cats for herd immunity levels requires political commitment and adequate budget.
- A “One Health” approach has been used to improve collaboration between organizations in public sector. But it needs to obtain participation from non-governmental organizations and private veterinary clinics.
- Level of awareness on rabies risk among citizens has been varied by areas and some subgroups and often changed over time .
- Responsibility of animal ownership is also one of the remaining challenges that needs to be improved.
- Animal rabies prevention and control at country borders requires joint efforts and extra resources.

## Way forward

- Continue to enhance “One Health” collaboration among public-private-educational sectors, in order to accomplish the vision “Rabies-free Thailand by 2020”.
- Implement the effective “Dog Population Management” countrywide.
- Ensure quality and adequate number of rabies vaccines for animals and humans.
- Research for novel vaccine and alternative measure of vaccination in animals.
- Enforce The Cruelty Prevention and Welfare of Animal Act, B.E. 2557 (2014) to prevent new stray dogs.