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Opportunities, risks and challenges for rabies elimination in ASEAN

Recap of virtual workshop 17-18 January 2023

Dr Melanie Bannister-Tyrrell and Dr Max Barot
Nossal Institute for Global Health

ASEAN Rabies Consultation Meeting
Revision of the ASEAN Rabies Elimination Strategy
2-4 May 2023, Bali Indonesia

Summary of virtual workshop outputs

- ASEAN Member States presented updates about national rabies programs, rabies epidemiology, and key challenges
- Key priorities for the revised ARES were discussed in breakout room sessions
- Findings from the desktop review and virtual workshop were used to inform the development of the first draft of the revised ARES



Risks and challenges

Dog vaccination

- AMS have a target to vaccinate at least 70% of the dog population – this target is not reached in most settings.
- Parenteral vaccine presents well-known challenges for vaccinating stray dogs; oral rabies vaccine may support increasing vaccination coverage
- Budget allocation for purchasing, distributing, and administering canine rabies vaccines falls short of requirements in most AMS.
- Limited resources and staff in animal health sector, including limited ability to engage private contractors to support mass dog vaccination efforts

Integrated surveillance and response

Integrated surveillance

- Limitations of routine sharing of human and animal health data on rabies cases at national and regional level
- Integrated Bite Case Management (IBCM) protocols are in place, but not consistently implemented in all areas
- Most AMS have a national dog bite registry, but there are gaps in recording of all dog bites and initiation of follow-up

Access to post-exposure prophylaxis

- Dog bite victims not accessing post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) due to lack of awareness of rabies risk, difficulties accessing health services, and costs of treatment.
- Gaps in access to PEP are particularly pronounced in rural and remote areas, where most rabies deaths occur

Community engagement and empowerment

- Community engagement and support for rabies control and elimination is variable
- Low awareness of rabies in many communities
- Opposition to or lack of compliance with dog control or management activities, including dog vaccination, in some areas

One Health governance and coordination

- Cross-sectoral action on rabies is supported through national strategic plans and task forces on zoonotic disease prevention and control, as well as through national action plans on rabies.
- Ongoing challenges to operationalize One Health coordination for rabies control, e.g.:
 - Gaps in funding available for rabies activities in the human and animal health sectors
 - Gaps in surveillance and gaps in data sharing across sectors
 - Limited involvement of environment sector in rabies control

Political support, attention and resources

- Sustaining high level political commitment in both animal and human health sectors is a major challenge
- Budget allocations do not meet requirements for rabies control and elimination
- Other emerging and high-priority threats to human and animal health, e.g.:
 - COVID-19 pandemic
 - African Swine Fever and other transboundary diseases

Cross-border movements

- Extensive land borders in many countries with high populations of roaming and stray dogs
- Difficulties accessing and sharing canine vaccination data and dog bite registries across national borders
- Discrepancies in dog population size estimates/census across borders
- Potential role of the trade in dogs and cats for meat
- Potential role of the pet trade (especially for unregulated and informal breeding/sales activities)
- Challenges for cross-border migrants to access PEP

Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on rabies control and elimination programs

- Dog vaccination, sterilization and management programs were curtailed due to lockdown and restrictions.
- Demand for and access to PEP declined due to closure of bite management centres and reduced travel from rural to urban areas.
- Planned monitoring, surveillance and evaluation activities were reduced or did not occur.
- Reduced health education for rabies due to movement restrictions
- Reduced acquisition of rabies vaccine due to procurement and supply chain challenges
- Rabies cases increased in humans and dogs in some countries in 2022, reflecting the disruption to rabies prevention efforts in 2020/2021



Key opportunities and priorities for rabies elimination in ASEAN

Key opportunities for rabies elimination in ASEAN

- Global momentum for rabies elimination: 'Zero by 30'
- Increasing availability of tools and resources to support national rabies programs
- Success of World Rabies Day, school education programs, and other community awareness programs
- Growing awareness and support for One Health

Key priorities for rabies elimination in ASEAN

- Align rabies elimination definition with the *Zero by 30* goal, which is to end human deaths due to dog-mediated rabies by 2030
- Include references to internationally recognised tools and indicators, such as the ‘Stepwise Approach to Rabies Elimination’
- Strengthen the One Health approach for rabies control and elimination to include local-level government, and clearly specify sectoral roles
- Emphasize the importance of community engagement and empowerment for rabies elimination
- Introduce a phased approach to rabies elimination
- Discuss opportunities for regional collaboration and resource mobilization

THANK YOU



This event is supported by the Australian Government

