

1st OIE workshop on stray dog management for Balkan countries (SDB1)

Bucharest, Romania, 17–19 June 2014

Ten Balkans countries¹ have agreed on a sub-regional 'vision': 'to become fully compliant with OIE standards on stray dog population control by 2025'. This means that they have committed themselves to reducing their stray dog populations to an acceptable level, thus greatly mitigating the risk of transmitting rabies and other zoonoses to humans through stray dogs.



From left to right: Dr P. Dalla Villa, European Commission; Dr C. Duicu, Delegate of Romania to the OIE; Prof. N. Belev, OIE Regional Representative for Eastern Europe; Dr S. Ralchev, OIE Sub-Regional Representation in Brussels

To achieve this vision, these countries agreed to develop national roadmaps and monitor their situation on a regular basis, using the OIE monitoring and evaluation tool specifically developed for this purpose, based on the provisions of Chapter 7.7. of the OIE *Terrestrial Animal Health Code*.

These were the key results of the First OIE Regional Workshop on Stray Dog Population Management for Balkan Countries (SDB1), held in Bucharest, Romania, from 17 to 19 June 2014, within the framework of the OIE Platform for Animal Welfare in Europe.

The workshop also enabled these countries to establish their baseline situation with regard to their stray dog population (to be further consolidated, by means of the evaluation tool) and to understand the bottlenecks and obstacles involved in properly and sustainably addressing this issue in line with OIE standards.

Experts from the public sector and civil society gave useful lectures on topics that should be at the top of the priority list; namely, how to:

- a) design legislation on stray dogs
- b) identify the sources of stray dogs

- c) ensure effective coordination between the competent authorities
- d) raise public awareness; and
- e) enable Veterinary Services to keep the public and stakeholders well informed of their stray dog control activities.

The countries of the region also shared their best working practices, demonstrating that operational solutions do exist and are applicable in this part of the world.

The objectives of the workshop were to:

- remind Members of the provisions of Chapter 7.7. of the OIE *Terrestrial Code* on stray dog population control
- review national control strategies for stray dog populations
- identify key weaknesses in their programmes
- share best practices in the region
- share a common vision at the sub-regional level to address the problem of stray dog population control, including its rabies component.

In light of the success of this workshop and the commitment of that these countries made towards achieving the vision, the OIE Platform will organise follow-up workshops (SDB2, SDB3, etc.) every two to three years, to continue supporting OIE Member Countries in the implementation of their national Roadmaps, and to monitor this implementation, as well as their increasing compliance with OIE standards. In between SDB

¹ Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Kosovo, the Former Yug. Rep. of Macedonia (FYROM), Romania, Serbia and Turkey – these countries were represented by their OIE National Focal Point for Animal Welfare and a veterinarian working on stray dogs at the municipal level



meetings, the OIE Platform will also organise and coordinate capacity-building activities, using the available expertise and resources of OIE partners in the region. For example, a regional awareness campaign on stray dogs has been scheduled for the end of 2014 or

beginning of 2015. Finally, through its dedicated website, the OIE Platform will collate and post information on best practices and continue to stimulate regional dialogue on stray dogs in Europe.

The OIE would like to thank the European Commission, Germany and

Romania — in particular, the OIE Delegate of Romania, Dr Cristian Duicu — for their significant financial and technical support, which were so crucial to the success of this event.

The workshop report, workshop video and all presentations are available on the website of the OIE Platform on Animal Welfare for Europe: <http://rpawe.oie.int/>

Regional policies to control rabies in the Southern Mediterranean

A workshop was held in Paris from 15 to 16 October 2013, aimed at improving coordination among the Mediterranean Neighbourhood countries¹ of the European Union (EU) in defining and implementing control policies for rabies in the Southern Mediterranean.

The workshop was organised and financed by the TAIEX² instrument of the European Commission, in cooperation with the Health and Consumers Department of the European Commission (DG-Sanco), the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC). It was labelled a **GF-TADs multi-regional workshop**³. Participants came from Algeria, Egypt, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Portugal and Tunisia. Speakers represented the OIE, FAO, WHO, EFSA, ECDC, DG-Sanco, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), the EU Reference Laboratory for rabies, the Pasteur Institute and the French National Veterinary School of Lyon.

In the Mediterranean region, the rabies virus is sustained almost exclusively by dog populations. The disease is usually introduced and/or spread over long distances in the region by dogs, travelling in cars with their owners. Given the biological characteristics of the disease, and the geographical situation of the Southern Mediterranean, where the desert provides a natural barrier to the South and the Mediterranean to the North, rabies appears to be a disease that could effectively be controlled at a reasonable cost.

Public awareness, mass vaccination of dogs and dog population management are the key elements in the control of rabies.

The culling of stray dogs alone is not effective to control either stray dog populations or rabies cases. Experts agree that vaccination strategies should aim at 70% vaccination coverage.

According to OIE and WHO data, controlling the virus reservoir (dogs) is much more cost-effective than concentrating efforts on the indefinite post-exposure prophylaxis of humans, which has no influence on the disease's ecology. In the long term, using just 10% of the money which is currently spent on rabies treatment, it would be possible to vaccinate all dogs in all infected countries and eventually to eliminate rabies cases in humans altogether. The control of stray dog populations should follow OIE recommendations.

Control strategies should be coordinated at the regional level to provide sustained results.

Public awareness, mass vaccination of dogs and dog population management are areas in which beneficiary countries need assistance, e.g. vaccine procurement via a regional/sub-regional vaccine bank, dog vaccination programmes combined with effective dog population management and responsible dog ownership, in cooperation with all relevant stakeholders, in accordance with the relevant OIE standards, notably *Terrestrial Animal Health Code*,

¹Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia

²TAIEX: Technical Assistance and Information Exchange Instrument (<http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/taieix>)

³GF-TADs: FAO/OIE Global Framework for the Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases

