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GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE OF RABIES

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Different variants of rabies viruses and/or rabies-related Lyssaviruses occur on all continents, except Antarctica. Each variant is generally associated with a principal host species whose use of space and social interactions allow the virus to persist in its populations. These principal hosts are all members of the orders chiroptera (bats) or carnivora. They all transmit the disease to other species, which are sometimes highly susceptible, but whose population biology is not conducive to maintaining an epizootic. One can distinguish between areas of the world in which dogs are the principal hosts and those where rabies is maintained in wild animals and in which only 0.1–5.0% of the rabies cases reported are in dogs. In large parts of Asia, Africa and Latin America, rabies in dogs is much more common, making up 95% or more of all diagnosed cases. Rabid dogs are the major source of human infection. The elimination of dog rabies through vaccinations and by promoting responsible dog ownership is therefore a recommendable goal for human and animal health authorities.

