The welfare of animals in countries in which rabies is endemic is frequently ignored. This is largely because of the gravity of the human health problem and this, combined with an ignorance of the best methods to control the disease and hence protect human health, can, and often does, result in extreme animal suffering.

Rabies itself causes great suffering in animals, farm animals, wildlife, cats and dogs, as it does in humans.

The OIE Guidelines on stray dog population control lay down practical and humane ways to control rabies in the stray and owned dog population.

One of the problems that needs to be overcome is the attitude of the authorities – veterinary services, national and local competent authorities and police – towards stray animals, both cats and dogs. It is important that these authorities are persuaded of the need for a holistic approach to dog control and not to propose poisoning and slaughter of dogs as the only solution. Vaccination programmes for animals, particularly dogs, is a vitally important control measure and whilst it may appear expensive at the time will eventually prove to be economically beneficial.

This paper will demonstrate how changing the socio-economic and public health attitude towards rabies control and animal welfare and, in some instances, eradication can be achieved.

Controlling, and eradicating, rabies is not impossible and if achieved, will have enormous economic as well as human and animal health benefits.