



CROSS BORDER COLLABORATION: THE INFLUENCE OF THE CHAMPION COUNTRY: RABIES IN SWAZILAND

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BIOGRAPHY

Dr Bavukile Siphosethu Kunene, graduated as Doctor in Veterinary Medicine and Zootechnia (Husbandry) at the Agrarian University of Havana (Cuba) in July 2013. Employed by the government of Swaziland as a Veterinary Officer in the department of Veterinary Field Services under the Ministry of Agriculture, where serving duties of disease surveillance, prevention and control, and livestock movement control. Swaziland's representative in the first Pan African Rabies Control Network meeting in Gauteng, RSA.

SUMMARY

Rabies still continues to kill people every day, a high proportion of them being children. In Swaziland there is a statutory requirement for annual vaccination of all dogs, which also stipulates that in case of an outbreak, infected areas should be declared rabies guard areas followed by vaccination campaigns. It has been proven that the most effective way to prevent dog-transmitted rabies in humans is by vaccination of dogs, and, with over seven years on national vaccination campaigns, Swaziland has not recorded human deaths due to rabies for over two years.

People in Swaziland value dogs for security, yet many fear them with animosity and do not develop a companionable bond. Domestic dogs accounted for 75% of all animal rabies laboratory-confirmed cases during the past five years. Prevention and control of canine rabies is therefore key as it is known that humans are accidental victims of rabies, with dogs being the main vector.

The Government of Swaziland, in collaboration with other stakeholders, is striving towards elimination of dog-mediated human rabies, through various rabies control programmes: Annual World Rabies Day Commemoration Events since 2007, annual vaccination campaigns by mobile teams countrywide and continuous vaccination points in all four regions of the country, animal bite reporting and outbreak declaration, annual spay/neuter clinics hosted by Swaziland Animal Welfare in collaboration with Swaziland Veterinary Association, post-exposure prophylaxis to dog bite victims and reporting of rabies cases to the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE).

Swaziland and South Africa continuously engage in cross-border collaboration meetings where issues such as rabies control are deliberated. The two countries amongst other Southern African Development Community (SADC) member states have a common Movement Permit for Dogs and Cats, which requires compulsory rabies vaccination for cross-border movements and further prohibits movement from rabies outbreak areas.

The country has also been working in collaboration with the KwaZulu Natal Rabies Elimination Project (WHO/Gates Foundation), which has funded rabies vaccine supplies for the country for the past three years, giving a total of 147,000 dogs vaccinated to date from this project. Other stimulation packages have been useful to veterinary officials during vaccination campaigns, and the response from the public with regards to turn-out numbers of dogs at vaccination centres has generally increased in areas where these stimulation packages have been in use.

Swaziland aspires to a rabies elimination target of 2030 in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.