

Rabies elimination efforts on Zanzibar

Dr. Emelie Fogelberg¹, Ellie Parravani¹, Dr Kassim G. Juma² and Dr Yussuf Haji Khamis²

1) World Animal Protection, Floor 5, 222 Gray's Inn Road, WC1X 8HB, London, UK.

2) Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries, Zanzibar, Tanzania

Introduction

Following an outbreak of rabies on Unguja island, Zanzibar in 1991, the government implemented prevention measures to halt the spread of the disease. Despite these measures rabies became endemic on the island.

World Animal Protection started working with the Government of Zanzibar in 2000 to assist in the implementation of a holistic, One Health approach involving people from the Ministries of Health, Livestock and Education.

Methods

A dog demography survey was carried out to enable the development of the rabies elimination strategy. World Animal Protection supported in the training of veterinary staff in dog handling, vaccination, surveillance and sample collection. Education on dog-bite management and post-exposure prophylaxis for humans was provided by the Ministry of Health to medical and project staff. School children were educated on rabies and responsible dog ownership.

Results

Educational efforts in schools and communities led to a 65% decrease in reported dog bite cases. By the end of 2014, 100% of the dog population had been vaccinated against rabies. As of October 2015, there have been no human cases of rabies or any suspected or confirmed dog rabies cases reported since December 2013.

Conclusion

Rabies is being successfully controlled on Zanzibar because of interdisciplinary collaboration and implementation of control measures that include mass dog vaccination and sterilisation programmes. Community engagement and education have also played a key role in preventing dog bites and motivating people to take their dogs to vaccination and sterilisation clinics. Because of its success the elimination strategy has now moved into the elimination and surveillance stage.