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## Self-declaration of freedom from rabies by Portugal

Self-declaration submitted to the OIE on 17 December 2018 by Dr Fernando Bernardo, Director General, OIE Delegate of Portugal, Direção Geral de Alimentação e Veterinária, Ministério da Agricultura, Florestas e Desenvolvimento Rural.

### I. Administrative organization of the Official Veterinary Services in Portugal

Portugal is administratively organized in 308 municipalities in 18 Districts and 2 Autonomous Regions (Figure 1) (1).

The Official Veterinary Services are organized in a vertical structure, with a Central Level (headquarters), Regional Level with 5 *Direções de Serviços de Alimentação e Veterinária Regionais*, DSAVR (Regional Directorates for Food and Veterinary) and 2 Autonomous Regions of Azores and Madeira (Figure 2) (Despacho 15262/2012 RD 2ª Série, of 18 November (2)).

Municipality veterinarians represent the local Veterinary Authority, according to Decree-Law 116/98 (Republic Diary, RD N.º 103 of 5 May) (3).

### Notification of rabies

Rabies is a notifiable disease in Portugal since 1953 according to national legislation:

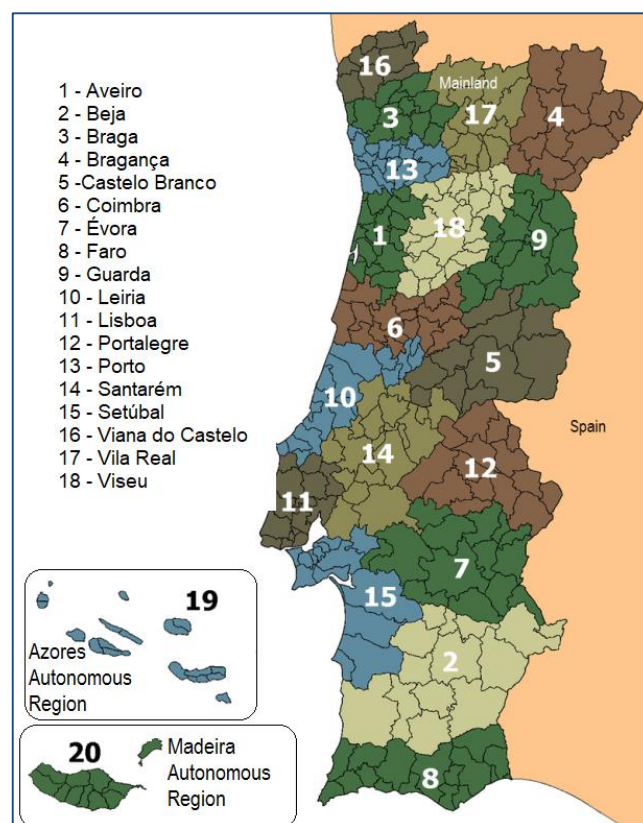


Figure 1. Municipalities and districts, Portugal

- Decree-Law 39209 (DR N.º 100 of 14 May 1953) (4), establishes sanitary measures to prevent, to limit or to eradicate animal diseases.

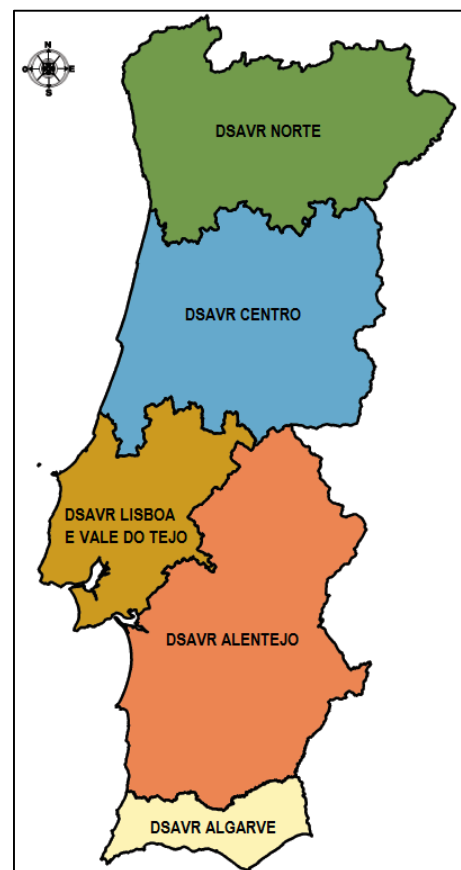
#### Other national legislation:

- Decree-Law 314/2003 (DR N.º 290 of 17 December) (5), approves the National Program of Surveillance and Prevention of Animal Rabies and Other Zoonosis that constitutes the health prophylactic and sanitary measures aimed to maintain the absence of rabies;

- Ordinance 264/2013 (DR N.º 157 of 16 August) (6), defines the technical standards and administrative procedures of the National Program, determines the obligation of keeping dogs with valid vaccination against rabies throughout their lives, and sets the procedures following any suspicion of rabies;

- Decree-Law 193/2004 (DR N.º 193 of 17 August) (7), transposes into national law Directive 2003/99/EC of 17 November with the objective of monitoring zoonosis and zoonotic agents and defines penalties for non-compliances;

Any changes in the epidemiological situation or relevant events are reported to the Animal Disease Notification System of the European Commission and to the OIE in accordance with Chapter 1.1. of OIE *Terrestrial Animal Health Code (Terrestrial Code)*.



**Figure 2.** Regional Directorates for Food and Veterinary DSAVR,

## II. History and epidemiological evolution of the disease

Dog mediated rabies was endemic in Portugal before 1877, when the first control measures were determined by Royal Decree. Those measures included the capture and euthanasia of stray dogs.

Anti-rabies vaccination was declared compulsory for all dogs older than 4 months since 1925 (Nacional Decree 11242/1925 (DR N.º 247 of 29 October) (8). Strict control measures to imports of susceptible animals, interdiction of entry in Portugal of dogs with no valid vaccination, obligation of registration and licensing for all dogs were implemented. Rules, including capture and confinement of stray dogs over a certain period of time, were also applied.

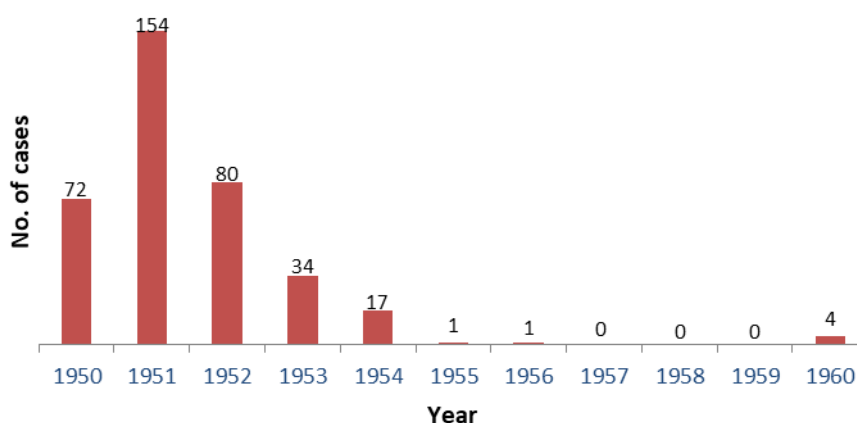
Since 1926 the Veterinary Authority organizes an annual anti-rabies vaccination campaign in all the territory, implemented by the Municipality veterinarians.

Between 1926 and 1956, 646 rabies cases in animals were reported, occurring in peaks interspersed with epizootic silences in some years.

From 1957 to 1959 there were no rabies cases. The last case of indigenously acquired rabies in Portugal occurred in 1960, in a dog in Mértola (in the region of Alentejo). That dog transmitted the disease to another dog and to two cats (4 cases, in total, in Mértola and in Alcoutim, in the region of Algarve).

Strict sanitary measures were implemented at the time, including the capture and euthanasia of all stray dogs and cats in a defined area around the outbreak; in the same area all registered dogs were vaccinated every six months.

Since 1960 no occurrence of cases of indigenously acquired rabies are registered. Figure 3 shows the evolution of cases in animals between 1950 and 1960.



**Figure 3.** Cases of rabies, animals in general, Portugal, 1950 – 1960

### Non-indigenously acquired rabies in Portugal

A case of non-indigenously acquired rabies was detected in August 1984 in a 2-month dog introduced illegally in Portugal from Mozambique. The situation was detected following clinical suspicion. The dog died and rabies was confirmed by FAT. A public alert was issued through Media. Persons that were identified having contacted the animal underwent post exposure treatment. Two dogs that also contacted the rabid dog underwent clinical observation and the necessary sanitary measures were implemented. Since 1984, no other case of animal rabies occurred in Portugal.

## III. Preventive measures

### 3.1. Animal Identification

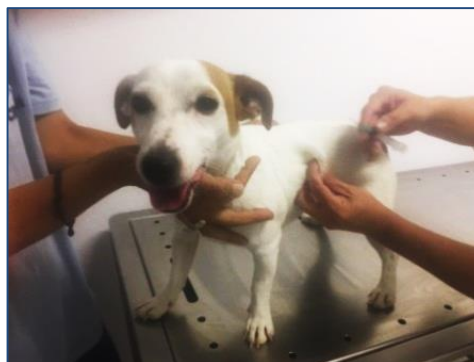
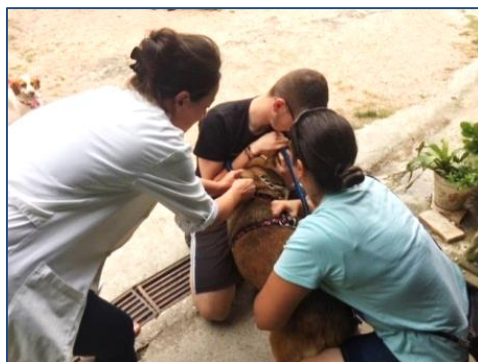
Electronic identification, registration of dogs and cats, responsible ownership rules and control of stray populations are also regulated by national legislation. Electronic identification is mandatory for dogs and voluntary for cats, according to Decree-Law 313/2003 (DR N.º 290 of 17 December) (9).

Relevant data about dogs and cats, such as microchip number, and respective owners are registered in the official database maintained by the Veterinary Authority - in 17 December 2018 there were 859.416 dogs registered in the database.

### 3.2. Vaccination

Anti-rabies immunization campaigns are organized every year at local level. In addition, dogs and cats are also vaccinated by private veterinarians. Anti-rabies vaccines used in Portugal ([http://www.dgv.min-agricultura.pt/xeov21/attachfileu.jsp?look\\_parentBoui=12444003&att\\_display=n&att\\_download=y](http://www.dgv.min-agricultura.pt/xeov21/attachfileu.jsp?look_parentBoui=12444003&att_display=n&att_download=y)) (12) published in DGAV webpage) are in accordance to OIE *Manual of Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines for Terrestrial Animals* (2018) and their effectiveness is evaluated according to the [Guideline of the European agency for the Evaluation of Medicinal Products EMEA/CVMP/682/99/FINAL](http://www.emea.europa.eu/press/news/media/12444003/attachfileu.jsp?look_parentBoui=12444003&att_display=n&att_download=y) (13).

A valid anti-rabies vaccination is required for the licensing of dogs at the council parish.



**Figure 4 & 5.** Anti-rabies official campaign in Amadora, Portugal, 2018

**Table 1.** Official anti-rabies vaccination campaign, Portugal, 2013 – 2017

Year	Number of vaccinated animals
2013	154,731
2014	164,771
2015	85,918
2016	67,188
2017	95,359

#### IV. Surveillance and monitoring

An ongoing surveillance system, in accordance with Chapter 1.4. of the Terrestrial Code, is in force since 1950s.

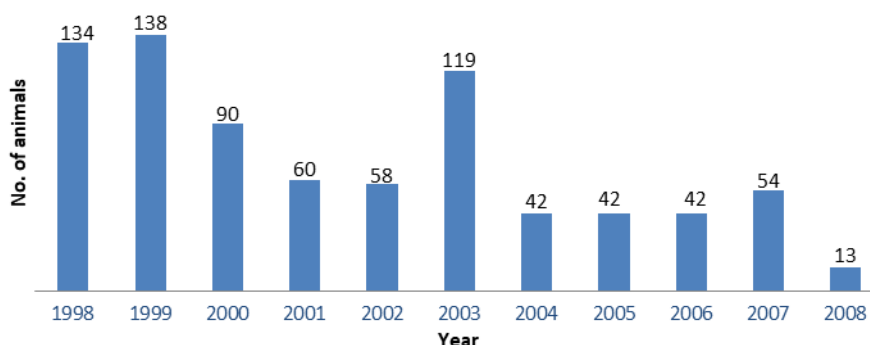
Suspensions of rabies are investigated, and animals that wounded a person or an animal are included in this group. Suspensions shall be reported to the Municipality Veterinarian. Suspected animals are put under clinical surveillance in quarantine premises, during at least 15 days, until the suspicion is ruled out. Animals that, eventually die during the quarantine period are sent to the National Reference Laboratory (INIAV, IP - Instituto Nacional de Investigação Agrária e Veterinária) to be submitted to necropsy and sample for the necessary diagnostic tests (FAT/ RTCIT/ PCR). Table 2 shows the number of suspected animals tested for rabies in the past eight years. All tests had negative results.

**Table 2.** Suspected animals tested for rabies, Portugal, 2011 – 2018

Year	Number of animals tested
2018	3
2017	3
2016	7
2015	6
2014	2
2013	3
2012	2
2011	4

## V. Surveillance in wild animals

A rabies surveillance program was implemented in wild carnivores by the Veterinary Authority between 1995 and 2008. This Program consisted of laboratory tests for the detection of rabies virus in hunted red foxes (*Vulpes vulpes*) and Egyptian mongooses (*Herpestes ichneumon*). The analyses were performed in the Instituto Bacteriológico Câmara Pestana. Table 3 shows the number of wild carnivores tested for rabies virus. All tests had negative results.



**Figure 6.** Number of wild carnivores tested for rabies virus, Rabies surveillance program Portugal, 1998 – 2008

Since then passive surveillance was adopted based on reporting observation of mortality in foxes and other wild carnivores.

Portugal has only one neighbouring country, which has not reported indigenously acquired rabies cases recently.

## VI. Import/trade procedures

As a Member State of the European Union, Portugal follows rigorously harmonised legislation in order to control the risk of introduction of the disease.

For non-commercial movement of pets:

- Regulation (EU) N.º 576/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 June 2013 on the non-commercial movement of pet animals and repealing Regulation (EC) N.º 998/2003;
- Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) N.º 577/2013 of 28 June 2013 on the model identification documents for the non-commercial movement of dogs, cats and ferrets, the establishment of lists of territories and third countries and the format, layout and language requirements of the declarations attesting compliance with certain conditions provided for in Regulation (EU) N.º 576/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council;
- For trade and import of dogs, cats and ferrets:
- Council Directive N.º 92/65/EEC of 13 July 1992 – last transposed by Decree-Law N.º 79/2011, DR 117 of 20 June (10) and Decree-Law 20/2015, DR 23 of 3 February (11) - laying down animal health requirements governing trade in and imports into the Community of animals, semen, ova and embryos not subject to animal health requirements laid down in specific Community rules referred to in Annex A (I) to Directive N.º 90/425/EEC, with respective alterations.

No imported case in the Orders *Carnivora* or *Chiroptera* has been registered in Portugal for the past six months.



## VII. Disease awareness and information to the public

Health educational awareness campaigns in order to alert the public to the risks of this zoonosis and to the obligation of dog's vaccination have been carried out by the Veterinary Authority systematically since 1976.

Information about rabies is published in the DGAV Website: <http://www.dgv.min-agricultura.pt/portal/page/portal/DGV/genericos?actualmenu=19257&generico=19241&cboui=19241>

## VIII. Conclusion

### Considering that:

- Rabies is a compulsory notifiable disease in Portugal since 1953 and any change in the epidemiological situation or relevant events are reported in accordance with Chapter 1.1. of *OIE Terrestrial Code*.
- During the last 2 years no case of indigenous rabies has been reported (the last case occurred in 1960).
- Regulatory measures for the prevention of rabies are implemented in accordance with the recommendations of the *Terrestrial Code*, including rules for the imports of animals - Portugal implements EU legislation for non-commercial movement of pets, for trade and imports of dogs, cats and ferrets.
- A rabies surveillance program is in place, rabies is a notifiable disease since 1953, suspicions are duly investigated and suspected animals are submitted to quarantine under official observation.
- No imported cases have been confirmed for the past six months in the Orders *Carnivora* or *Chiroptera*.
- Awareness and education campaigns are in place and accessible to the public alerting to the importance of this zoonosis, to the risk of introducing the disease and to responsible pet's ownership practices, including compulsive identification and vaccination of dogs.

**The OIE Delegate of Portugal declares that the country complies with the requirements for a country free from rabies as of 17 December 2018 in accordance with Chapter 1.6 and Article 8.14.3. of the *OIE Terrestrial Code* and in compliance with the information provided in WAHIS.**

## References

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Figure 1, modified from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_municipalities\\_of\\_Portugal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_municipalities_of_Portugal)  
Figure 4 and 5. Photos provided by Dr. Susana Santos, Municipality Veterinarian of Amadora.