

RV NEWS BULLETIN

RABIES ALERT

Please take time to read the contents of this document, as it contains information that is relevant to Rabies, a deadly disease.

The intent of this document is to make people aware of the threat of rabies, and not to scare people. Remember that you are ultimately responsible for your own well-being.

Rabies

There have been four positive cases on Rabies on the estate. Three Jackal and one mongoose. After debating this matter with the ecological subcommittee, various vets and doctors, the following course of action has been decided on in order to deal with the matter:

1. Communication providing information on RABIES.
2. Protocol in the event of being in contact with any animal in a Rabies area
3. Control of rabies on the estate

1. Communications

1.1 What is rabies and how is it transmitted?

Rabies is a preventable viral disease. The rabies virus infects the central nervous system and causes disease in the brain. There is no effective treatment and once symptoms start, death is inevitable. The rabies virus is transmitted from infected animals to humans through scratches, bites, or licks as it is carried in the mucous membranes of the lips or eyes. The virus cannot be transmitted through intact skin, so touching, petting or being close to the animals is not a risk. In addition to dogs, many other animals can transmit rabies, any warm blooded mammal. In South Africa, these most importantly include: cats, cattle, bats, mongoose and antelope to name just a few.

1.2 Can rabies be prevented?

Yes! By following a few easy steps:

- Avoid being bitten: Not every bite poses a risk of rabies, but a bite or scratch from a stray animal, sick animal, an animal that is behaving strangely, or an unprovoked attack would suggest a rabies risk. Never handle stray animals or animals that appear sick.
- If exposed to a suspected rabid animal:

Wash the wound: Washing of the wound very well for at least 10 minutes with water or soap and water to wash out the virus.

Seek treatment early if exposed: Rabies can be prevented in almost 100% of human cases if correct preventative treatment is given timeously after being exposed to suspected rabid animals. Visit your doctor as soon as possible. The doctor will assess your risks and, if required, will give a course of rabies

vaccinations. In certain instances, you may also require rabies immunoglobulin to be injected into the wounds.

- **If you have family in Hoedspruit outside of Raptors View advise them to:**

Vaccinate their pets: They should ensure that their dogs and cats are regularly vaccinated against rabies - it is a legal requirement.

Dogs and cats should be given vaccine at 3 months of age, a booster within the following 9 months, and every 3 years thereafter. In high risk areas, yearly vaccinations are recommended. If not sure if the pet has been vaccinated, when the pet last received a vaccine, or if overdue for a vaccine then advise them to visit their local veterinarian immediately.

1.3 What are the symptoms and signs of rabies disease?

In humans: The first symptoms of rabies are flu-like, including fever, headache and fatigue, which then progresses to involve the respiratory, gastrointestinal and/or central nervous systems. There may be signs of hyperactivity ('furious' rabies) or paralysis ('dumb' rabies). In both furious and dumb rabies, there is progressive paralysis, followed by coma. Death occurs during the first seven days of illness.

In animals: Rabid animals behave abnormally. Initial stages wild animals are seen to lose their natural fear of humans and other predators, increased vocalization. In the mid stages of the illness they can be aggressive, seem disoriented, partially paralyzed (particularly in the hind quarters), the final stage they may salivate excessively, or suppurate from the eyes, appear extremely disorientated as the brain becomes more affected by the virus, or they may show none of these symptoms. An infectious rabid animal may be healthy in appearance and behaviour for a period of time prior to the

1.4 How is rabies diagnosed?

In animals, rabies is diagnosed using a test which looks for the presence of rabies virus in brain tissue. In humans, several tests are available to confirm rabies disease once a person becomes ill; however, there are no tests which can detect if rabies has been transmitted from exposure to a rabid animal before a person becomes ill.

1.5 Who is most at risk?

People most at risk of rabies live in rural areas of Africa and Asia, where access to healthcare and animal health facilities is limited, stray dogs are more common, and fewer pets are regularly vaccinated against rabies. Children are at the highest risk of dog rabies; about 30% to 60% of the victims of dog bites are children less than 15 years of age, and children often play with animals and are less likely to report bites or scratches. In areas known for rabies, persons with frequent exposure to animals (e.g. veterinarians or animal health workers, wildlife specialists or researchers) are also at high risk.

1.6 Is there immunisation against rabies?

Yes, there is an effective and safe vaccine against rabies. Certain groups of people at higher risk of being exposed to rabid animals should consider vaccination to protect themselves: Those who work with animals (including veterinarians, animal health workers, conservationists, zoologists etc). Travellers who are planning to visit remote areas where there is a risk of rabies, and medical care is difficult to obtain or may be delayed (for example, hiking through remote villages where dogs are common). Although vaccination does not eliminate the need for additional therapy after a rabies exposure, it simplifies management by eliminating the need for anti-rabies immune globulin and decreasing the number of doses of vaccine needed.

1.7 You tube clips on Rabies

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H8fbAFOMTp4>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oBn385Mun6A>

1.8 Recent Articles on Rabies

There has recently been an article in the Farmers weekly (14 August 2015). Try and read this for more information.

Protocol in the event of being in contact with an animal

The Following steps are suggested as a reasonable way to limit exposure to rabies.

- I. **Avoid contact with any animal** – All warm blooded animals are susceptible to rabies. Avoid contact with any animal. Do not feed pet, touch wild animals such as Nyala. Do not pick up sick or lame animals such as door mice, squirrels AND bush babies. Do not approach wild animals when out walking. Avoid contact. More especially avoid feeding animals with hand contact besides the danger of them becoming aggressive after seeming passive and tame if you have a small cut or scratch on your hand the saliva from the animal if it is rabid can infect you. The second form of feeding bowls or feed blocks do not do as all animals will go to the licks or bowls and one may be infected and its saliva can then infect other animals also feeding on same block or bowl.
- II. **Report any unusual behavior of animals** – Reports can be sent to the Estate cell number, which is manned 24/7. The number is **071 675 2525**
- III. **Report any contacts to medical practitioner** – In the event of being bitten, scratched or even just touching any animal, wash the area of contact immediately with soap and water for many minutes, and contact a doctor promptly. The town has an emergency number – 0894 770 1743, which is manned by a doctor after hours. They also have the required vaccination medicine in Hoedspruit, in the event of an exposure. Residents can also go for pre-exposure injections as added peace of mind

Cut out the following table and keep it handy as a quick guide

1	Avoid contact with all animals	
2	Report incidents and animals	071 675 2525
3	Wash the wound with soap and water and get to the doctor immediately	084 770 1743

3. Rabies on the Estate

We have looked into many ways of trying to prevent the spreading of Rabies on the estate, and on determining the extent of the situation. Vaccination of the animals was not deemed as a viable option, as individual animals would have to be darted, and marked to prevent it from being treated again. The extent of the animals territory (some of which extend past our fence boundary), as well as considering their active times, limits the success rate of such a program.

The most practical method is to destroy any animals perceived to be Rabid, and send away for testing.

We would like to conduct a survey of the jackal population on the estate by means of using camera traps. This would possible assists with estimating the jackal population size, and their distribution on the estate. If you are in possession of a camera trap, and would like to participate in the survey, contact Byron (byron@raptorsviewhoa.co.za)