

For immediate release

Annual number of deaths from rabies hits 70,000 worldwide

Economic burden of disease hits US\$4 billion

Geneva, Glasgow 28 September 2011: The Global Alliance for Rabies Control (GARC) today announces that preliminary data released this month at the OIE Global Conference on Eliminating Rabies has estimated 70,000 people worldwide die each year from rabies at a cost of US\$4 billion.

The research, released to mark the importance of World Rabies Day, shows that deaths from rabies is on the increase, with the disease reaching epidemic proportions in certain parts of the world. It also confirms rabies as one of the most lethal zoonotic, or animal-transmitted diseases, killing more people each year than SARS, H5N1 and Dengue fever, combined.

Although rabies is entirely preventable, controlling the disease has been elusive in large portions of the developing world due to a lack of resources with which to carry out vaccination programmes. The subsequent epidemic has wrought a disproportionate effect on the young, with one child dying every ten minutes from the disease.

“Rabies places a dreadful economic burden on the populations where it strikes, but this is only half the story, as it also brings untold pain and suffering to victims and survivors. This is made all the worse by the fact that we know it is preventable, and we call on governments and health authorities around the world to join us in taking action,” Said Professor Deborah Briggs, executive director, GARC.

“Research has proven that in those parts of the world where dog rabies is present and comprehensive dog vaccination programmes have been carried out in conjunction with an improvement in educational awareness and availability of human vaccines, deaths from rabies have been reduced to zero. Our pilot schemes show that we can replicate this success around the world, saving human and animal lives. With the right commitment, this problem could be addressed on a global scale,” said Dr. Elizabeth Miranda, Asian Coordinator, GARC.

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About GARC

The Global Alliance on Rabies Control (GARC) is a charitable, not-for-profit organisation. Its mission is to eliminate human deaths from rabies and relieve the burden of rabies in animals, especially dogs. In 2008, in collaboration with the Philippine Government, it launched the first successful rabies control programme in Asia in decades. The programme was aimed at involving everyone in the community, ensuring a holistic approach to combating rabies, including school children, healthcare professionals and over 15,000 volunteers. The cost of the programme was just £0.36 per person for the three years, showing how a small investment can make a life changing difference.

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