

Awards for Exceptional Latin American World Rabies Day Events

A national postage stamp, a conference and a project with schoolchildren are the winners of the 2009 World Rabies Day Best Event competition in Latin America and the Caribbean. The standard of entries was exceptional, and ten Latin American countries reported taking part in World Rabies Day (WRD), compared to eight in 2008.

The competition – organized through a partnership between the Alliance and PAHO - encourages participation in WRD throughout Latin America. In 2009, the judges were looking for innovative events which could provide a model for others, and which looked at sustainable approaches to combatting rabies. 16 events competed for three prizes of \$1,000 US dollars in three categories: local, regional and national/international, and the winners will use their prize money towards events for World Rabies Day 2010.

First prize in the national/international category went to Peru for the launch of a national postage stamp commemorating the inaugural World Rabies Day. The stamp has found its way all over the world, and it was seen as an exceptionally innovative model for raising awareness of the rabies prevention agenda. Special mention was given to a large-scale event in Mexico focusing on sterilization of pets, and one in Bogota, Colombia which combined a vaccination campaign with a multi-agency exhibition and forum by teleconference.

First prize in the regional category was given to a conference held at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine in the Tucuman region of Argentina, which included detailed information on epidemiology, diagnosis, statistics and current rabies prevention methods. A special commendation for innovative collaboration was given to veterinary students and teachers in Chile's Araucania region who obtained industry sponsorship to administer 2,000 doses of vaccine to dogs free of charge.

The local category winner was a long-term project in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, which was considered exceptional for its innovation and as a model of sustainability. The project, called "My Faithful Friend" (Mi Amigo Fiel), has trained facilitators and Life Science teachers to deliver information in schools across the city, so that the first group of students pass the information on to the next. In this way the information is being rolled out across the city. The project has already provided valuable data on the importance of education in the fight against rabies. Canine rabies cases in the city have been reduced from 400 in 2005 to a small handful today, and the project aims to reduce them to zero.

Special mention was given to a rabies conference held by the City of São Paulo, Brazil, which reflected an ongoing multidisciplinary approach to rabies control. A project in Huaycan, Ate, Peru, also received a commendation for its event which provided free vaccination for over 1,000 dogs in areas of economic deprivation in Lima.

The competition provides a wealth of information on best practice from government to local level throughout Latin America, and the World Rabies Day team would like to thank everyone for 2009's exceptional events. The Alliance and PAHO are looking forward to the 2010 competition.

You can register your event at: <http://www.worldrabiesday.org/EN/Events.html>