

## **Media Statement**

### **Joint Media Statement by the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development and the South African Veterinary Council the risks associated with Rabies**

**11 February 2021**

The Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) and the South African Veterinary Council (SAVC) wish to alert members of the Public on the risks associated with Rabies.

Since the beginning of the year the number of confirmed rabies cases are thirty-three (33) in animals. The department is saddened to report that one human fatality has been reported from KZN (10-year-old boy). Both entities would like to assure members of the public that although Rabies is an unfortunate reality, but it can be prevented.

Rabies is a fatal viral disease that affects all mammals and is transmissible from animals to humans. The virus is transmitted in the saliva of infected animals through licks, scratches and bites. Dog mediated rabies in humans is fully preventable and this is why the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) have committed to eradicating dog mediated human cases by 2030. We only have 9 years left to achieve this goal, and it is indeed achievable if we all take the responsibility to have our pets vaccinated.

“A person dying of rabies is an unnecessary death,” says Dr Nomsa Mnisi, Vice President of the SAVC, “the disease is preventable purely by

vaccinating animals, we therefore should not be seeing people, especially the most vulnerable like children, dying.” This statement was published on 28 September 2020 for World Rabies Day.

“It is the responsibility of each pet owner, in terms of the Animal Diseases Act, to ensure that their pets are vaccinated against rabies. By doing this, you will not only be protecting your beloved animals, but you will also be playing your part in the bigger picture; protecting the lives of fellow human beings, especially children” said Dr. Mpho Maja

The SAVC and Government Veterinary Services (<https://www.gov.za/world-rabies-day-2020#> and <https://www.dalrrd.gov.za/Branches/Agricultural-Production-Health-Food-Safety/Animal-Health/information/pamphlets/pamphlet-main>) run regular awareness campaigns and will gladly supply more information. Watch this [short video](#) about Akanyang Ngakane, the Animal Health Technician employed by the Gauteng Veterinary Services, where she explains the importance of why Animal Health Technicians play a crucial role in the fight against rabies and how they create awareness in areas where rabies is more prevalent.

DALRRD and SAVC wish to urge all dog and cat owners to please take their pets for vaccination.

Rabies occurs in domestic and wild animals across South Africa, DALRRD and SAVC encourages communities not to touch or pick up unknown or stray animals, especially dogs and cats.

Report any rabies symptoms in animals immediately to your nearest State Veterinary Office and notify them of any possible human contact with suspect rabid animals. Humans that have had contact (lick, scratch, bite) with a suspect rabid animal must wash the wound well with soap under running water and immediately seek medical assistance to receive preventative treatment. This is of utmost importance because post exposure treatment must start immediately to prevent infection from Rabies.

This year, in September, will be celebrating the **15<sup>th</sup>** World Rabies Day. We urge all South Africans to be part of the global **community** and join in the global fight against Rabies. Have your pets **vaccinated** against rabies and use a **SAVC registered professional** to ensure best practice animal health care of your animals. Veterinary Services can be relied upon to provide valuable information and quality vaccines. **Don't hesitate, vaccinate!!!**

The Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development in collaboration with South African Veterinary Council appeals to all dog and cat owners to ensure that their animals are vaccinated against rabies.

#RabiesEndsHere

**For more media enquiries please contact Mr. Reggie Ngcobo, Media Liaison Officer and Spokesperson on 0662980980.**