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LIVE RABIES INTERVIEW LATENU RADIO

AGRICULTURE

Rabies is fatal; vaccinate your dogs

By Baghara Tanko

As you are aware, the month of September has been dubbed "Rabies Awareness Month" by all health partners. Consequently, this year's celebration is scheduled to take place in the Upper East Region. The theme for this year's celebration is "One Health, Zero Deaths", which is aimed at highlighting awareness, celebrating rabies prevention efforts, intensifying activities and uniting towards a total eradication by 2030.

Rabies is a deadly viral disease of warm-blooded animals and is transmitted to humans through the bite or a scratch of an infected animal, resulting in fatal encephalitis (inflammation of the brain), nervous system disorder and death.

It is obvious that anyone who gets rabies dies. More than 95 per cent of human cases of rabies are due to bites or scratches from infected dogs.

It is now proven that in America, bats are the major source of human rabies deaths. Transmission can also occur when infectious material, usually saliva, comes into direct contact with human mucosa or fresh skin wounds.

Global efforts

As a result of its devastating effects, the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), the

Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) and the Global Alliance for Rabies Control (GARC) have established a global "United Against Rabies" collaboration to provide a common strategy to achieve "zero human rabies deaths by 2030".

Statistics

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), about 70,000 people die of rabies every year across the world.

Out of the estimated 70,000 people that die of rabies every year, 95 per cent of deaths occur in Africa and Asia, especially in the developing countries, with Ghana not being an exemption.

Rabies is prevalent in more than 150 countries and territories and about 40 per cent of people bitten by suspect rabid animals are children between the ages of five and 15.

The situation in Ghana

Dog bite cases keep increasing over the years in Ghana, especially in the Ashanti and Greater Accra regions due to a rise in the population of stray dogs.

Between January and September 2014, 70 dog bites had been recorded in Accra, with six deaths according to the Veterinary Service Department.

In Ghana, 25 human rabies deaths were recorded between January 2009 and July 2011. There has been an increase in rabies cases over the years as 57

people died of rabies in 2016 and it is feared that there were many unreported cases.

In Greater Kumasi this year (2022), out of 74 outbreaks 38 tested positive for animal rabies and in the same period five persons died of human rabies.

Any solution?

Rabies elimination is possible through vaccination of dogs and prevention of dog bites. Many countries have been declared free of rabies by the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention.

However, it is expensive treating a rabies exposure. Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) comes with an average cost of US\$40 in Africa and US\$49 in Asia. When it comes to Africa and Ghana, this cost could be catastrophic to affected families.

Veterinary experts say vaccinating dogs is the most cost-effective strategy for preventing rabies in people. Dog vaccination reduces deaths attributable to rabies and the need for PEP as a part of dog bite patient care.

The situation poses a major challenge to the Veterinary Services Directorate (VSD) of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture.

But we know Ghana is equally up to the task particularly when the VSD is currently undergoing retooling to ensure the strengthening of the institutional capacity to effectively perform its functions of prevention, detection and control of animal diseases, including rabies in the country.

It is expected that the enhanced capacity of the VSD will reduce the vulnerability of the country to the outbreaks of animal diseases.

With adequate resources and diligent programme management, Ghana should be able to eliminate rabies. Most European countries and some African countries namely Cape Verde, Libya, Mauritius and Seychelles have been able to



Some veterinary officers vaccinating a dog at their headoffice in Accra

eliminate rabies completely from their countries.

Symptoms

Veterinary experts indicate that the incubation period for rabies is between two and three months, but may vary from one week to a year depending on factors such as the location of virus entry and viral load.

Early symptoms of rabies include a fever with pain and unusual tingling or burning sensation (paraesthesia) at the wound site.

As the virus spreads to the central nervous system, progressive and fatal inflammation of the brain and spinal cord develops.

Preventions

The prevention of rabies infection largely depends on the prevention of dog bites for

both children and adults. Also, an essential rabies vaccination programme can decrease both the incidence of human rabies and the financial burden of treating dog bites.

Increasing awareness of rabies prevention and control in our communities is paramount, especially with pet ownership.

Suspected rabies

After contact with a suspect rabid animal, first, inform the veterinary services. The living animal should be identified and quarantined for observation, then immediately flush and wash the wound for a minimum of 15 minutes with soap and water, detergent, povidone-iodine or other substances that can kill the virus.

The matter is the head of public relations, Ministry of Food and Agriculture
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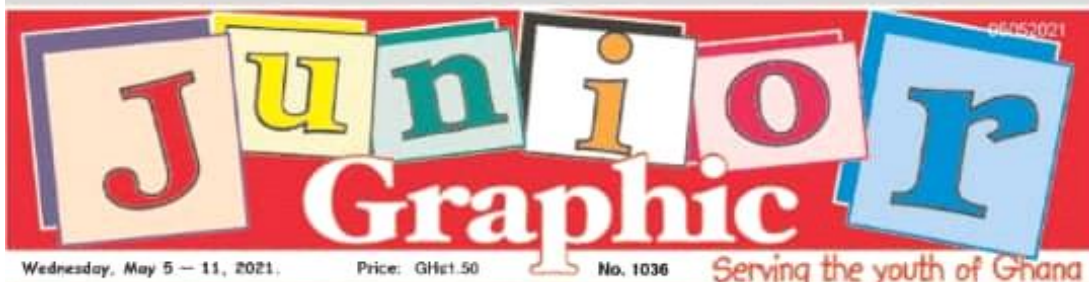


Bats are also carriers of rabies



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**Learning to
achieve our goals**

• Form Three students of the Greenfield School at Agona Swedru in the Central Region having a group discussion. Leading the discussion is Portia Appiah, their classmate.



Beware of pets

They cause strange diseases

By Augustina Tawiah

A Wildlife Veterinary Specialist, Dr Richard *Sana-Ire*, has stressed the need for children to be educated on zoonotic diseases.

Thus, he explained, would help them to know about those diseases and how to behave around those.

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News

Beware of pets

They cause strange diseases

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animals that carry them so that they do not contract them.

Zoonotic diseases or zoonoses are illnesses that originate from animals and are passed on to humans either through a bite, scratch, eating the meat of a contaminated animal or drinking their milk.

Examples of such diseases are rabies, anthrax, tuberculosis, COVID-19 and Ebola. Ghana has seven zoonotic diseases that have been described as potential diseases because of their high impact on human and animal health.

"If children are educated about zoonotic diseases, they would know what to do when for instance they are bitten by dogs and where to go," he stated.

Dr Sena-Ire, who was speaking at an interview with the *Junior Graphic* as part of World Veterinary Day observed on April 24 said, the lack of education about zoonotic diseases among children and the fact

that they were not taught in detail in schools pose a challenge because a lot of people, including children, were not aware of them.

As a result, when they contract those diseases, they don't realise they got them from animals.

Unfortunately, he said, children were the most vulnerable when it comes to zoonotic diseases because they play around with and take care

of pets such as dogs, cats, chicken, goats, sheep and other domestic and wild animals at home.

He, therefore, called for zoonotic diseases to be made a standalone course in the curricula of basic schools, adding that at the moment in the country, a few of these diseases, such as rabies, are treated under Agricultural Science and General Science in basic schools but they were not broad enough.

If children are educated about zoonotic diseases, they would know what to do when for instance they are bitten by dogs and where to go.

Dr Sena-Ire, who is also a lecturer at the School of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Ghana, Legon, said when children receive such education in school, they would know they were not supposed to take raw milk from animals or eat meat from dead and sick animals because they would get infected if the animal has a zoonotic disease.

Again, he said, children would know how to handle animals they considered their pets and how to behave around those animals so they avoid getting the

diseases they carry.

Dr Sena-Ire advised that because of the danger dead animals pose in transferring diseases to humans, it was important that children protect themselves before they handle any dead animal and they should also wash their hands after handling

them.

"You should not eat the meat of dead and sick animals because if they have any zoonotic disease, they are likely to transmit it to you. A dead animal should be properly disposed of to prevent other animals from eating their meat and getting infected with diseases which they were likely to transmit to humans. Any animal suspected of having been infected with a disease should be reported to the appropriate quarters such as veterinary officers, environmental officers or the district assemblies," he noted.

World Veterinary Day was initiated by the World Veterinary Association (WVA) in 2000 in order to celebrate the veterinary profession annually on the last Saturday of April. The objective is to bring the importance of the Veterinary Profession to the society as well as individuals in focus.

This year's day was observed on the theme: "Veterinarian response to the COVID-19 crisis."

News in bits

Performance of Free SHS students in WASSCE justifies investment — President

President Nana Adu Donkwa Akiito-Adjo has said the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) results of the first batch of the free senior high school (SHS) candidates have justified the decision of the government to invest heavily in free quality education for young people.

He said even though the initiative came with a huge cost to the nation, the government took the decision because all countries that had made giant strides in their social, economic, scientific and industrial sectors did so by investing more in

education.

"If we are really going to cut the Gordian knot of development in Ghana, investing in the youth of our country, the young people of our country, was the surest way to go," the President added.

President Akiito-Adjo said this when some of the students who excelled in the 2020 WASSCE were introduced to him at the Jubilee House in Accra.

Out of the 465 candidates who had aggregate 'A' in eight subjects in the examination, 411 of them were Ghanaians. Also, the three Overall Excellent Awards were taken by Ghanaian students.

Some of the students could not, however, honour the invitation because they are currently pursuing tertiary education outside the country in the fields of medicine and engineering, among other courses.

President Akiito-Adjo further expressed joy over the performance of the students, saying when the details were released, "I was beside myself — and the icing on the cake was the fact that the three most excellent students in the examination are Ghanaians."

He said even though the students wrote the examination during the difficult period of the COVID-19 prevalence, they had proven that the

investment made in them was worthwhile, adding that "we are going to make the free SHS a permanent feature of our educational system".

Tracing the history of education and development in the world, President Akiito-Adjo said the first country to implement free SHS was the United States of America because they saw the wisdom in investing in that sector to create access to quality high school education.





GHS ISSUES ALERT OVER RABIES OUTBREAK IN ASHANTI REGION

GOAL-SCORER IN THE GHANA PREMIER LEAGUE - ISHMAEL ADDO "HEARTS OF OAK REDUCE RATES FOR OLYMPICS"



