

# Alarming Rise in Global Rabies Cases Calls for Urgent Attention: Current Vaccination Status and Suggested Key Countermeasures

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## Abstract

In the wake of rising rabies cases worldwide, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, it is time to understand the scenario better and suggest technically sound and plausible countermeasures. This article is an attempt at this perspective. Although a critical zoonotic viral disease, rabies is preventable. Medico-legally, the ailment is classified as furious rabies and paralytic rabies. The four world bodies, namely, the World Health Organisation (WHO), the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), and the Global Alliance for Rabies Control (GARC) endorsed framing a global support system to eradicate human death from dog-mediated rabies under the 'Zero by 30' framework. The framework calls for extending the vaccination of dogs to reduce the risk of human rabies. Stray dogs became aggressive primarily due to their food shortage during the pandemic lockdown. As many adopted stray dogs were disowned post-pandemic, decreased human-dog interactions increased the aggressiveness among dogs. As a result, 'dog-bite' cases rose, with a sudden spike in rabies cases and dog-bite-induced deaths in India and elsewhere. Jeopardising the 'Zero by 30' plan is certainly a public health concern. Stray dog sterilisation through the irreversible ductal occlusion technique and reversible inhibition of sperm under guidance (RISUG) are other suggested interventions to control rabies. Importantly, wildlife like foxes, raccoons, skunks, and bats could also be rabid. Three out of the four WHO-pre-qualified human vaccines against rabies are intradermally administered as post-exposure prophylaxis, while the intramuscular one is more popular. Even though 'Zero by 30' may not be achieved within the set timeframe, it is time for a concerted and planned strategy by global agencies to curb the globally rising rabies cases and manage the disease better. The 'One Health' model seems to be a plausible guideline and the ultimate countermeasure to achieve this.