

3 ZOOTIC AND VECTOR-BORNE DISEASES

a Rabies

Canine rabies diagnosed in Gauteng

A case of rabies was diagnosed in a dog from the suburb of Kloofendal, in Roodepoort, Gauteng Province, in August 2015. The dog was taken to the local vet with unsteady gait and hypersalivation. The diagnosis of rabies was confirmed following euthanasia and examination of brain tissue. The dog had received a single vaccination against rabies. The dog had been taken to Kroonstad, Free State Province with its family some weeks prior to presenting ill. This is the second case identified on the West Rand of Gauteng. A first case was identified in a bulldog kept in a townhouse complex in April 2015 in the adjacent suburb of Helderkruin. Molecular typing of the rabies strain isolated from both cases is pending, and will confirm if these cases are canid rabies, and allow identification of strain type.

It is crucial that pet owners ensure that their pets are vaccinated for rabies as required by law. Dogs and cats are vaccinated at three months of age, receive a booster vaccination before one year of age and every subsequent three years thereafter. Often Gauteng dog owners are complacent about rabies vaccination, as rabies is uncommon in the province. However, low vaccination coverage amongst dogs creates a susceptible population which allows for perpetuation of rabies transmission when the virus is introduced from other communities. This was demonstrated during the 2010 outbreak of rabies in Soweto, which was the first recorded outbreak of dog-associated rabies with local transmission in Gauteng Province. In this case, the virus was traced back to an introduction from KwaZulu-Natal.

In the light of this case, all animal exposures in Gauteng Province, and especially in the West Rand,

should be considered at risk of rabies virus transmission. The location of the exposure, behaviour and vaccination record of the animal involved are important to consider. Vaccination records should be scrutinized. Rabies post-exposure prophylaxis comprises thorough wound cleaning and four doses of rabies vaccine given on days 0, 3, 7 and 14 (add fifth dose on day 28 for immunocompromised patients). For category III exposures, e.g. where wounds drew even a drop of blood, rabies immunoglobulin should also be provided.

A total of five cases of human rabies has been confirmed for South Africa in 2015 to date. These cases were reported from Limpopo (n=2), KwaZulu-Natal (n=1), Eastern Cape (n=1) and Free State (n=1) provinces. In addition, a suspected case of rabies from Eastern Cape Province was reported but could not be confirmed by laboratory testing.

For more information and access to the national rabies guidelines, visit www.nicd.ac.za.

Source: Centre for Emerging and Zoonotic Infections and Division of Public Health Surveillance and Response, NICD-NHLS