

3 ZOO NOTIC DISEASES

Rabies

No further cases of human rabies have been confirmed since the last report. The NICD has confirmed a total of five human rabies cases in South Africa to date; these cases were reported from Eastern Cape (n=2), Limpopo (n=1) and North West (n=1) provinces, and one imported case (a South African national who acquired the disease in Angola). All of these patients contracted disease from exposure to rabid dogs. It is noteworthy that four of the cases sustained only scratches, which reiterates the importance of appropriate post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) for seemingly superficial wounds following exposure to a potentially rabid animal. None of these cases sought medical care following the exposure event, which underlines the general public's lack of awareness regarding the risk of rabies following exposure to dogs and other potentially rabid animals.

An increase in the number of dog rabies cases has been reported in North West Province. Historically this province has reported relatively few animal rabies cases compared to most other provinces, with yellow mongoose and black-backed jackals being most commonly affected. In the June 2014 edition of the Communiqué we reported the death of a child from the Rustenburg surrounds who was denied rabies PEP after being scratched by a dog. This is only the sixth case of confirmed human rabies in this province since 1986, and the first reported since 2006. This is also the first human

case acquired in the province following exposure to a rabid dog – all previous cases were linked to wildlife exposures. The North West Province Communicable Disease Coordinator reported that during the month of July 2014 a total of nine animal bite incidents was reported from healthcare facilities throughout the province. These involved jackal (n=2), domestic dog (n=2) and cattle (n=5) exposures and were reported from Zeerust, Rooiplaas, Mokgala, Opfontein and Jaarsfontein areas. Community awareness campaigns and health education has been ongoing since the recent human rabies case was reported. Healthcare workers have been sensitised to the risk of rabies when assessing patients with animal bites/exposures, and have also been reminded to consider rabies disease in acutely ill patients with a suggestive clinical presentation and compatible exposure history. Animal vaccination campaigns have been conducted within the province in response to the increase in dog rabies cases.

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