

1 ZOOBOTIC AND VECTOR-BORNE DISEASES

a Update on rabies in South Africa

From mid-April 2016 an increase in the number of confirmed animal rabies cases in Gauteng Province has been noted. Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (GDARD) reported 22 cases involving jackals (n=13), domestic dogs (n=6), cattle (n=5) and a single case in a honey badger. These cases were respectively reported from Randfontein, the Muldersdrift/Kromdraai/Lanseria area of Mogale City, Carletonville and northern Pretoria. In response, GDARD have vaccinated more than 4000 domestic dogs and cats, 500 head of cattle and 150 sheep in the Province.

No human cases of rabies have been associated with this outbreak, but several exposures have been reported. The public is urged to seek immediate medical advice if exposed to potentially rabid animals. Routine vaccination of domestic dogs and cats is not only required by law, but is essential to reduce the risk of exposure to humans. Where rabies is reported in jackals, local farmers should consider vaccinating cattle against rabies. In July 2016, a report of at least seven cases of rabies in cattle on a farm in the North West Province was

reported to the NICD. There had been multiple exposures to farmers and farm workers. Delayed recognition of rabies as the cause of death in the cattle delayed post-exposure management of the human contacts. The North West Departments of Health and Agriculture, together with the NICD conducted a site visit and provided health promotion to farmers and workers in the area.

Rabies in animals is characterized by behavioural changes. Wild animals become tame whilst pets can become aggressive. For the national guidelines for rabies post exposure prophylaxis please visit www.nicd.ac.za/?page=guidelines&id=73

To date a total of two human cases of rabies has been confirmed in South Africa. These cases were reported from KwaZulu-Natal and Free State Provinces.

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