



# GF-TADs

GLOBAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE  
PROGRESSIVE CONTROL OF  
TRANSBOUNDARY ANIMAL DISEASES



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



World Organisation  
for Animal Health  
Founded as OIE

## Standing Group of Experts on Rabies in Europe

under the GF-TADs umbrella

### 5<sup>th</sup> meeting (SGE RAB5)

Teleconference, 4 July 2022

## Conclusions and recommendations

Considering that:

- Rabies eradication is a GF-TADs and One Health priority for Europe as a region of 53 Member Countries;
- Experience in Europe shows that rabies can be eradicated if oral rabies vaccination campaigns (ORV), coupled with robust surveillance, are implemented consistently, twice a year, over several consecutive years, including at least two years after the last confirmed case of rabies when strong passive surveillance is implemented;
- The epidemiological situation in Europe is progressively improving as the number of cases has dramatically decreased in the last years; except in few areas.
- In certain countries of the region, surveillance remains the weakest point of their rabies eradication programmes, particularly as regards the testing of indicator<sup>1</sup> animals for rabies detection (passive or general surveillance); as a result, in some countries/territories, the number of animals sampled and tested is low and this compromises eradication efforts and overall success achieved during last decade.
- There is a non-negligible administrative burden of implementation of ORV and surveillance, including budget allocation and procurement of vaccines and diagnostics, and services for oral vaccine distribution, which is often managed by different authorities or stakeholders in respective countries.
- It is necessary to safeguard and consolidate the achievements on rabies control, accomplished so far by the combined efforts of all sectors in all countries/territories, in the region of South-East Europe

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<sup>1</sup> Suspect or indicator animals are animals that show clinical signs or abnormal behaviour suggestive of rabies, animals found dead, road-kills and animals involved in human exposure.

## General conclusions and recommendations

The Standing Group of Experts on Rabies for Europe recommends:

1. To uphold coordination of measures between countries in the region, including on ORV and surveillance, and dialogue between CVOs and animal health officers from Veterinary Authorities, experts and representatives of GF-TADs, and therefore, consider organizing one meeting of the SGE on Rabies every year, preferably in face-to-face format. Different regional initiatives can be considered for this, such as the Animal Disease Eradication Western Balkans Initiatives.
2. To task SGE Secretariat (WOAH Regional Representation in Moscow) to continue regional coordination on Rabies in the region of Europe, to facilitate monitoring of the implementation eradication programs in the Members, in collaboration with FAO, the European Commission and SGE Members, and promote any actions relevant for rabies eradication
3. To develop pathways to facilitate sustainable planning and implementation of rabies eradication programmes, including administrative (procurement, capacity building) and disease control activities (e.g. preventive vaccinations, including ORV, surveillance, awareness raising) . SGE members should continue building own capacities to implement these activities in close collaboration with relevant national authorities within the GF-TADs and One Health frameworks, and with EU Delegations in respective countries when relevant, with a view to start with these activities well in advance and to implement a strong project management prior to and during their implementation.
4. To promote regular and transparent epidemiological information sharing from countries/territories in the region with other GF-TADs members (e.g. disease notification through ADIS and WAHIS) within the GF-TADs and One Health frameworks, and stimulate cross-border coordination of rabies control measures.
5. To open the membership of the Standing Group of Experts on Rabies in Europe to other countries in the region of Europe where the epidemiological situation has deteriorated or the risk of spreading of rabies has increased, and to invite observers from the One Health framework organizations.
6. To foster the active engagement of experts participating in the ongoing EU-funded project for the Western Balkans, or other projects, with a view to bring substantial technical support, expertise in various areas, data analysis capabilities, administrative procedures, design of surveillance and rabies control programmes, and other related aspects, as all of which will greatly enrich and improve SGE performances.

## Recommendations on oral vaccination campaigns against rabies (ORV)

7. To continue with ORV efforts and ensure it is implemented for at least six consecutive years and not ceased earlier than two years after the last confirmed case of rabies (golden standard), provided that appropriate passive surveillance is performed and monitoring of vaccination in accordance with international standards and/or best practices.
8. To consider phasing out of vaccination only after careful risk assessment (importance of surveillance data) and within a regional perspective, as the situation in bordering countries/territories should be taken into account before any decision in this regard due to the fact that premature cease of vaccination in a country/territory might jeopardise rabies eradication in the whole region of South-East Europe.

9. To secure and strengthen adequate coordination of ORV amongst bordering countries/territories in terms of timing and vaccination areas, as it is of paramount importance to eradicate the disease. This is particularly relevant in areas close to the international borders where the adequate coverage of the areas with vaccine baits might be challenging.
10. To draw up specific arrangements at national level for the sustainable supply of vaccines to ensure timely response to any evolution in the rabies situation, including for emergency vaccination in case of rabies resurgence.

### Recommendations on rabies surveillance

11. To step up efforts on rabies surveillance as it remains a key point for rabies eradication programmes, and recall the importance of passive surveillance<sup>2</sup> which appears to be still a weak point in some countries or areas where the number of animals sampled and tested is low.
12. To boost awareness raising efforts, amongst competent authorities, hunters, farmers and all other stakeholders involved as a good tool to improve passive surveillance, by allocating sufficient resources, providing trainings, implementing procedures and improving coordination amongst these stakeholders based on GF-TADs and One Health approaches. EU funded project(s) may also be important tool(s) to support SGE Members in designing proper sample size and providing operating procedures/guidance to improve national surveillance programmes. In the case of budgetary constraints, number of samples for active surveillance could be reduced to increase number of samples for passive surveillance.
13. To increase surveillance in proximity of any new cases to appropriately estimate the extension of the outbreak and take an informed decision of the area to be vaccinated.
14. To ensure greater coordination of surveillance activities for Rabies with activities implemented for other TADs (e.g. ASF, HPAI) to ensure cost-effective and complementary work, particularly if these actions involve coordination with hunting associations and other stakeholders, training and awareness raising campaigns, including towards the general public.
15. To ensure the maximum realization of plans for surveillance for rabies in wildlife and domestic animals in the current context of habitat disruption, migration of humans and animals (e.g. pets) due to the situation in Ukraine.
16. To call for regular epidemiological information sharing with members of the GF-TADs framework and other parties within the One Health Framework to allow an informed decision of the areas to be vaccinated and regional coordination of rabies control measures.

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<sup>2</sup> Detection of indicator animals for rabies detection.