



Rabies investigation and response: Kulan-weyne village, northwest of Mogadishu

5 May 2010

Background: A resident at Kulan-weyne village situated 20 kilometres northwest of Mogadishu, was attacked by a mongoose on 27 April 2010. The man, who suffered a bite from the animal, later alerted the health teams who went in and preserved the head of the animal for further investigations to rule out rabies.

Findings: Rabies is a common occurrence for residents of Kulan-weyne where a majority of cases have been reported in the past. It has been observed that bites from animals with rabies occur yearly during the months between February and April. Following mongoose bites, 13 rabies-associated deaths have occurred in Mogadishu and its surrounding areas.

Previous case: The last case reported this year was that of a 5 year-old boy from the same village bitten by a mongoose on 13 January 2010. The victim died 2-days later after developing hallucinations, muscle spasms, seizures among other signs and symptoms. On 3 April, the brain of the mongoose was subjected to laboratory tests that confirmed positive for rabies on IMMUNOFLOURESCENT ANTI-BODY TEST (IFAT).

Rabies is an illness that affects the central nervous system. It is transmitted to people from infected animals. Rabies is preventable through a series of vaccinations after exposure, but it is fatal once symptoms appear

Response and management: To facilitate effective strategic response to further cases of suspected rabies, WHO has pre-positioned stocks of anti-rabies vaccine in Mogadishu, accessible to health authorities and all health partners. The victim of the attack received the initial dose of anti-rabies vaccine on same day. WHO is urging the local health authorities and community to monitor and respond promptly to cases of animal bite, especially in Kulan-weyne. There is an increased risk of rabies in this village and its surroundings due to the continued existence of animal hosts.



Figure 1: Pictured mongoose



Figure 2: Procedural cleaning of victims and vaccination

Globally, over 50 000 people die from rabies each year, majority from developing countries where vaccination activities of dogs and other animals against rabies is non-existent.