

Rabies Disease is a controlled disease under the Animal Diseases Act (Act No. 35 of 1984)

Abattoirs: RABIES



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WHAT IS RABIES ?

- A viral disease that infects all warm-blooded animals INCLUDING PEOPLE and is endemic in South Africa, meaning it is widespread and found across most of South Africa
- **It is 100% FATAL!!! But also 100% PREVENTABLE through awareness and vaccination!**
- Rabies is spread through the saliva of an infected animal
 - In most cases, this is through a bite from a rabid animal
 - Rarely, it can also be spread through direct contact with infected saliva when there are open skin wounds
- Rabies affects the brain causing inflammation and abnormal function
- In South Africa, the yellow mongoose and black-backed jackal are the most commonly affected wild animals
 - While people rarely come in direct contact with these animals, our cattle, dogs and cats frequently do. If they are bitten and have not been vaccinated, they become infected and spread the disease to people
- Generally, infected animals show a change of behaviour:
 - Friendly animals become aggressive, wild animals become tame
 - Muscle paralysis causes difficulty swallowing so they often produce lots of saliva – farmers often mistake cattle and sheep with Rabies with having something stuck in their throat
- There is no treatment once clinical signs are seen:
 - Unvaccinated animals suspected of having Rabies are euthanised/ culled as a precaution
- Vaccination in our animals is the only way to eradicate this disease!
 - **All dogs and cats have to be vaccinated against Rabies BY LAW in South Africa**



Rabies in humans

- People exposed to Rabies have an excellent chance of survival IF they receive rapid, intensive treatment immediately after exposure
- If you suspect you have been bitten by a rabid animal or exposed:
 - Wash exposed area thoroughly with running water and soap for 10-15mins
 - Immediately go to your nearest clinic or doctor to start post-exposure treatment



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- o Inform your state veterinarian as soon as possible so they can investigate further and test the animal for Rabies if necessary
- Prevention
 - o Ensure your animals are vaccinated
 - o Know the signs of Rabies and treat anything suspicious as Rabies until proven otherwise – do not pet suddenly tame wild animals, do not approach stray animals
 - o If you work in a high risk profession (veterinarians, animal health technicians, game wardens etc) then get vaccinated!

Reference:

SAVC. Vaccinate Your Animals Against Rabies. April 2021.
<https://savic.org.za/vaccinate-your-animals-against-rabies/>

Spickler, Anna Rovid. Rabies and Rabies-related Lyssaviruses. January 2021.
<https://www.cfsph.iastate.edu/Factsheets/pdfs/rabies.pdf>

Contacts:

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