

**ZOONOTIC AND VECTOR-BORNE DISEASES**

## An update on rabies in South Africa

No cases of human rabies have been laboratory confirmed in South Africa for 2020 to date. In 2019, South Africa reported a total of ten laboratory confirmed cases. In addition, six more deaths were classified as probable rabies cases (cases were compatible with rabies clinical manifestations and a history of exposure, but it was not possible to confirm or exclude a diagnosis of rabies in the laboratory due to no or insufficient specimens received).

The vast majority of reported human rabies occur in Africa (36.4%) and Asia (59.6%). It is estimated that worldwide, 60 000 individuals, the majority of whom are children, die of rabies annually. Over the last ten years, South Africa has recorded an annual average of eight human rabies cases across the country, with the exception of the Western Cape Province. From 2010-2019, most human rabies cases in South Africa were reported from the Eastern Cape (27%, n=22), KwaZulu-Natal (31%, n=25) (Figures 1 and 2) and Limpopo (23%, n=19) provinces. More than 80% of these cases were linked to a domestic dog exposure.

The Animal Diseases Act, 1984 (Act No 35 of 1984) law mandates owners to have their pets vaccinated against rabies between the ages of 3 and 7 months, again at 12 months later and then every 3 years. Vaccination protects the animals from rabies and consequently prevents transmission of the rabies virus from animals to humans. In combination with rabies awareness, and availability of, and access to, anti-rabies prophylaxis, vaccination of animals provides effective measures to prevent rabies in humans. For more information about rabies prophylaxis for human patients after exposure, please visit [www.nicd.ac.za](http://www.nicd.ac.za).

**Article source:** Centre for Emerging Zoonotic and Parasitic Diseases, NICD-NHLS; [januszp@nicd.ac.za](mailto:januszp@nicd.ac.za)

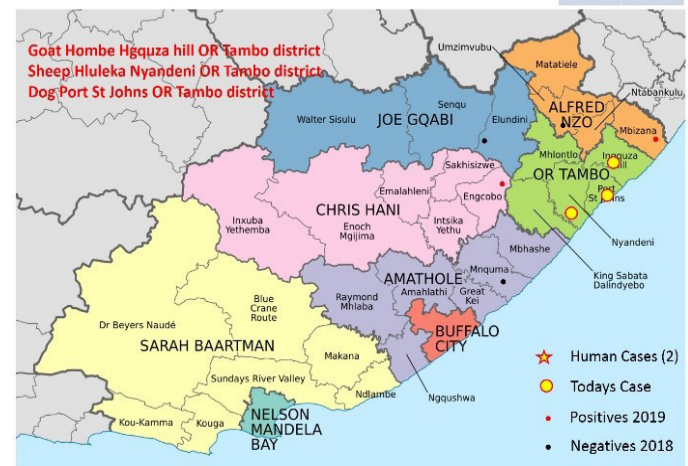
**KWAZULU-NATAL RABIES 18 -19 Mar 2020**

Canine	Jackal
35	0
<b>Humans 2020</b>	<b>0</b>



**EASTERN CAPE RABIES 29 Jan 2020**

Pos	Neg
5	3



**Figures 1 and 2.** Canine and human rabies detection in KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape provinces

**Source:** Kevin le Roux, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Development, KwaZulu-Natal Province.