



To : Editors & Health Journalists

Issued by : National Institute for Communicable Diseases

Date : Wednesday, 2 September 2026

World Rabies Day 2026: We are stronger together

As we approach World Rabies Day on 28 September 2026, South African and global stakeholders are uniting behind the 2026 theme, 'Stronger Together,' which highlights a simple but powerful truth: rabies elimination is only possible when we work together. From communities and pet owners to veterinary and para-veterinary professionals, healthcare professionals, policymakers and international partners, every sector has a role to play in preventing rabies and protecting both people and animals. Through stronger collaboration, better communication and coordinated action, we can move closer to a world free from rabies.

South African stakeholders have once again come together through the National Rabies Advisory Group, joining forces in the fight against rabies. We aim to create awareness around rabies and the animal and public health impact this deadly disease has, using multiple platforms. Be on the lookout for the national social media campaign in September 2026.

Rabies remains one of the world's deadliest yet most preventable diseases. This year's World Rabies Day theme, 'Stronger Together', reminds us that eliminating rabies requires partnership at every level. Communities, pet owners, veterinary and para-veterinary professionals, healthcare workers, government departments, policymakers and partner organisations each have a critical role in rabies elimination.

Rabies prevention depends on coordinated human, animal and environmental health systems working together in support of each other.

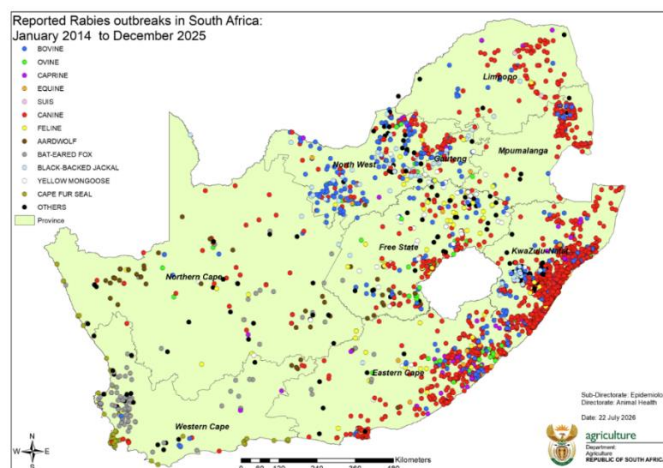
Core rabies messages

Rabies is nearly always fatal once symptoms appear, but it is preventable through vaccination and prompt post-exposure treatment.

- Although Rabies is 99.9% fatal once a person or animal shows clinical signs, it is also 100% preventable through vaccination of our pets and timely and correct treatment of exposed humans.
- Rabies is a deadly disease with no cure once symptoms appear. It can be transmitted to people by an infected animal's bite, scratch, or lick. If a person is bitten, scratched, or licked by an animal suspected to have rabies (an animal

showing odd behaviour or neurological symptoms), the person needs to wash the wound thoroughly with soap and running water for at least 10 minutes and seek medical attention immediately. Post-exposure prophylaxis treatment will involve a series of rabies vaccinations and rabies immunoglobulin being injected into the wound (if the skin has been broken).

- If your dogs and cats are vaccinated annually against rabies, they form a protective barrier for your family and protect you. The same is true if everyone in your community ensures that their dogs and cats are vaccinated annually.
- Rabies vaccines that are registered for use in South Africa are safe to use in your dogs and cats and should be administered through a registered veterinary professional.
- Legally, every pet owner must have their dogs and cats vaccinated to protect both humans and animals against rabies. The first rabies vaccine is given at 12 weeks (three months) of age, followed by a booster vaccination one month later. A booster can be given up to 12 months later, but one month later is the recommended option. Thereafter, a booster is legally required every three years. In high-risk areas, annual vaccination is strongly advised!
- Remember that any mammal can become infected with rabies – this includes pets, wildlife, livestock, and humans. Typical wildlife species that can host rabies include jackals, foxes, mongooses, aardwolf and cape fur seals, amongst others.
- Dogs and cats are often moved between provinces by travellers, workers, or holiday-goers, which can easily cause the spread of rabies to any area if these animals are not vaccinated against rabies and are incubating the disease.



Enquire with your local state or private veterinarian, animal health technician or welfare organisation. State veterinary office contact details are available at:

<https://www.nda.gov.za/index.php/component/content/article/451-provincial-veterinary-services-contacts>



A list of all registered veterinary facilities is available at: https://savc.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/FacilityRegisterPublish_July-2026.pdf



Vaccinate your dogs and cats, support campaigns, share accurate information, educate others and strengthen community protection. For more information about rabies, visit the NICD website [here](#).

#WorldRabiesDay #WRD2026 #StrongerTogether

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For enquiries and interview requests, please contact: Media@nicd.ac.za.

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