



Health Policy Brief

RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR TROPICAL MEDICINE



Dog Population and Vaccination: Finding the Right Ratio to Achieve Rabies-Free Philippines

Key Findings

We conducted the study with two major objectives; the first was to conduct an owned dog population survey, and the second was to ascertain the level of knowledge on rabies of the identified community. Given the recommendation of the rabies control program of using a 1:10 ratio when dog population numbers are unavailable, we hypothesized that identifying gaps in owned dog population could provide better estimates and support vaccination strategies in the future.

This study was conducted in six municipalities of the province of Bulacan, a densely populated province in central Luzon where the number of cases of human rabies is high.

Our findings established that we might be underestimating the actual dog population in the country by using the ratio prescribed by the current guidelines. The ratio of 1:3.7 from our data might prove to be more reflective of the real-world figures and is consistent with the findings of other dog population studies previously done in the Philippines. With the 1:10 ratio, we only cover 41.7% of the dog population and even less using the 1:3.7 ratio with only 15.5% coverage. This means that we are way below the target of 70% sustainable animal vaccination.



Our survey on the community members' knowledge on rabies shows that the community has a relatively good understanding of rabies; however, their grasp on the concept of how the disease can be transmitted between animals and humans is lacking.

Most participants of the study were not able to correctly answer the question on whether rabies can only be transmitted by rabid dogs. We theorize that this knowledge gap contributes to the persisting misconception that rabies is innate in dogs, and therefore is not possible to completely eliminate. Addressing this knowledge gap is an essential step in eliminating rabies.



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