

Operation zero Rabies Kannur

Dr. S.S. Manjinath
Project Co- Ordinator

It is 100 years since Louis Pasteur tried his anti-rabieç vaccine on human beings, and still Rabies remains a dreaded zoonotic disease in Asia, Africa and South Africa. WHO report of 1993, reveals that around 25000 people die of Rabies everyyear world wide, and 7 lakh people have to undergo post exposure treatment. 72% of the deaths out of Rabies are happening in India. Since Rabies is still not a notifiable disease and baseline epidemeological data are insufficient, the exact figures of death are not available. In India, this disease is mostly transmitted through bites of rabid dogs. The high dog population and lack of legislative measures as licensing etc, attribute to this menace.

In India, the facilities for treatment against Rabies is pathetic. The Production of anti-rabieç serum needed in cases of class III bites is very low and amounts to only 1% of the actual requirement. High cost and scarcity of serum lead to more number of deaths out of Rabies. Tissue culture vaccine production in India is only 5% of the actual need. Even the nervous tissue vaccines are also not available (WHO recommends phasing out of this vaccine)

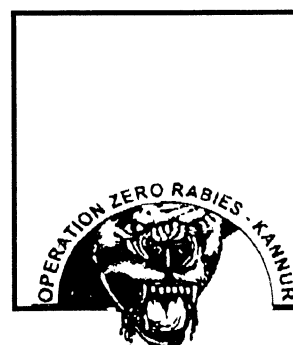
The less fortunate victims of Rabies are often people of low income group, or socially backward or those living in slums or even homeless. It is

shocking to know that 40% of the victims are children.

Out of the total dog population of our state 70% are feral dogs, 25% community dogs, and only 5% are family dogs. This population of both feral and community dogs amounting to 95% of the total dog population, are never vaccinated or licensed, and is the biggest hindrance in the control of Rabies in our society. WHO is of the opinion that we can very well control Rabies if atleast 75% of the total dog population is immunised.

A timebound, intensive programme on warfooting, based on the three basic steps as enumeration, vaccination, and destroyal of stray dogs. Also it should be a multisectorial approach incorporating the services of experts from Animal Husbandry Department, Public Health Department, Department of Local Administration, and other social, voluntary organisations, to accomplish the task of control of Rabies. A political will and social commitment are needed for this mass movement and ought to have a solid backing through legislative measures and public support.

Under the leadership KVSSA, Peringome Vayakkara was declared as the first Rabies controlled Panchayat in India. This success , motivated the Dis-



tract unit of Indian Veterinary Association to launch a mass campaign named 'Operation Zero Rabies' aimed at declaring Kannur District, rabies controlled. The task is really enormous when we find that Kannur District has 81 Panchayats and 6 Municipalities. And if we can accomplish this, definitely we can look forward to extend this programme throughout the state of Kerala.

The programme is meticulously planned. On 27th December '95, the District Co-ordination committee was constituted with District Panchayat President as Chairman, District Collector as Convenor, District Secretary of IVA as co-ordinator. Members of District Panchayat, Chairmen of Municipalities, Presidents of Block

Educational seminars with the help of video cassettes on Peringome Vayakkara programme were prepared and distributed in the District.

Panchayats, District Medical Officer, representatives of various political parties, Lions clubs, Rotary clubs, Jaycees, National Service Scheme, Sasthra Sahitya Parishad and Nehru Yuvak Kendra are members of this committee. Separate finance and publicity committees are also formed. Working committees were formed at all the Municipalities and Panchayats, and Block supervisory committee formed at Block level. Sub committees and squads were formed in each and every ward of the Panchayats to ensure public participation.

Various programmes were arranged to enlighten the Public on the importance of the programme. Educational seminars with the help of video cassettes on Peringome- Vayakkara

programme were prepared and distributed in the District. The District Coordination Committee periodically reviewed the stages of implementation.

Census of dogs was completed with the help of ward level squads. Sufficient quantity of prophylactic antirabies vaccine (Nobi vac-R) was procured and made available at subsidised rates. Collars bearing the sign "Operation Zero Rabies- Kannur 96" were distributed with vaccination certificates.

As a part of the programme, a state level seminar and panel discussion on Rabies was conducted at Municipal Town Hall, Thaliparambu on 20 th July 96. Dr. S Sulochana (Head, Dept: of Microbiology, Veterinary college), Dr. M.R Sasindranath (Associate Professor, Dept. of Preventive Medicine, Veterinary college) Dr Aisha Guharaj (Retd. Director of Medical Education) presented papers and participated in the panel discussion. Dr. P. Balachandran (Member, Kerala State Veterinary Council) acted as the moderator. Large number of veterinarians from different parts of the state attended the programme. A workshop on the implementation of the rabies control programmes was also held on the same day in which Dr. P.P Vava, (Director of Animal Husbandry) Dr G. Sudevan (Addl. Director of Animal Husbandry, and Dr N. Ajayan (Asst. Director, Livestock Diseases Control) participated and enlightened the peoples' representatives.

Around eighty seven veterinarians are attending to the vaccination camps, and even making house calls as part of the programme. Destruction of stray dogs was also started where the vaccinations are over. But non availability of sufficient number of 'Dog catchers' is a problem and to solve this, the committee decided to arrange for the training to interested youth.

The campaign at Thalasseri Municipality is over and it is expected that by December 96, the district can be declared as Rabies controlled. For effective implementation of the programme, the following proposals are to be seriously considered.

1. Rabies Control Board at state level and monitoring cells at district level may be constituted with the active participation of Animal Husbandry Department, Public Health department, Department of Local administration, and SPCA.
2. Preventive vaccinations and licensing of dogs to be made obligatory through suitable legislations.
3. Legislation to be enacted to make the owners of dogs and local bodies accountable and liable for providing compensation to the victims of dog bites.
4. Reasonable compensation packages, protective measures, free treatment, Insurance etc. may be provided to the dog catchers.

5. To make vaccines for both human beings and animals available through District monitoring cells, at subsidised rates.

6. Rabies diagnostic laboratories may be established under the District monitoring cells.

Indian Veterinary Association understand that only the community of Veterinarians can give the necessary leadership to the campaigns of control of Rabies, which is one of our major social commitments. By involving in the crusade against Rabies, Veterinarians can get acquainted with people from all walks of life, and are getting a rare opportunity to transform themselves as social workers also.

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