

International collaboration essential in fight against rabies, new study finds

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A new study, published today in the journal *PloS Neglected Tropical Diseases* has given new insights into the spread of rabies in the Middle East, showing that the deadly disease regularly moves between countries in the region.

The international team of researchers including scientists from the University of Surrey and the Animal and Plant Health Agency, have mapped the spread of [rabies](#) in the region to help inform control methods.

Previous studies have demonstrated that rabies, a fatal disease transmitted by the bite or scratch from an infected animal, still kills approximately 60,000 people every year. Although some regions such as Western Europe are free from rabies, the disease is still endemic in many parts of the world. Surveillance in these endemic regions is crucial to controlling the disease and reducing the risk of re-introduction into rabies-free areas. However, this surveillance is often inadequate due to low public awareness or lack of resources.

"Understanding the spread of rabies is an important step in the control of the disease," said Dr Dan Horton from the University of Surrey's School of Veterinary Medicine.

"This study has uncovered regular movement of disease across borders in the region, emphasising the need for countries to work together to control this neglected disease.

"We need to increase awareness of rabies in the local population, so that they can take appropriate health precautions such as seeking medical attention if they get bitten. It is also important to improve understanding of the spread of the disease among key decision makers, so effective control policies can be implemented in animal reservoirs."

Professor Tony Fooks from the Animal and Plant Health Agency said: "A key feature of this study is the application of modern analytic techniques that are used to identify disease pathways and inform targeted interventions to prevent spread. International collaboration such as that demonstrated in this study is important to help quantify the burden of disease and ultimately improve awareness"

Provided by University of Surrey

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