

Every nine minutes, someone in the world dies of rabies

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A human death from rabies is a tragic but rare thing in the United States and most developed nations. It's just as tragic but sadly common in parts of the world where some 3 billion people are at risk of being bitten by a rabid dog. More than 59,000 people die of rabies each year because they cannot get the care they need. That's about 1 person dying of rabies every 9 minutes.

Most of these deaths are in Africa and Asia, and nearly half of the victims are children under the age of 15. Many of these lives can be saved if bite victims and healthcare providers know what to do and have what they need — [rabies](#) vaccine and immunoglobulin.

"Measures to prevent rabies in people are simple: wash the wound right after you are bitten and get follow-up care and vaccination immediately," said Ryan Wallace, veterinary epidemiologist with CDC. "However, the primary method of prevention, and the more cost-effective intervention in the fight against rabies, is vaccination of domestic pets, particularly dogs."

Today is World Rabies Day, an opportunity for people around the world to learn more about the impact that rabies has on people and animals and what each of us can do to put the world on the path toward eliminating rabies. This year's theme is End Rabies Together, which challenges individuals and organizations to pull together to end the needless suffering and deaths caused by this preventable disease.

The fact that so few people in the United States and other developed nations get rabies shows that the disease can be controlled. Canine rabies has been eliminated in the United States, thanks to routine dog vaccinations and licensing and better control of stray dogs. Since the control of canine rabies in the United States, it has now been recognized that numerous wild animals can be infected with this disease. For that reason, people still must remain aware of the risk of rabies and seek medical care when exposed to wildlife and unusually acting animals.

To combat rabies, CDC works with many partners, including the Global Alliance for Rabies Control (GARC), World Health Organization, Humane Society International, National Association of Public Health Veterinarians, and American Veterinary Medical Association. Together, these partners have made great strides toward eliminating rabies in countries hard hit by rabies.

For example, in Ethiopia, which has reported some of the highest rates of human and animal rabies deaths in the world, a project is under way to control canine rabies through activities such as education, mass dog vaccination clinics, spay-neuter campaigns, establishment of new laboratories to diagnose rabies in dogs, and training to show veterinarians how to safely capture and humanely euthanize dogs suspected of having rabies. CDC and partners are working together to establish the first rabies-free zone in Ethiopia and ultimately end canine rabies in this country.

Progress is also being made in Haiti, one of the last remaining countries in the Americas where rabies infection in dogs is common and many people do not know what to do after they are bitten by a dog. Free-roaming dogs and a shortage of [rabies vaccine](#) are also problems in some areas of the country. The key to preventing rabies deaths is educating people about rabies and controlling [canine rabies](#) by testing and vaccinating dogs. Earlier this month, Haiti's Ministry of Agriculture and

Ministry of Public Health worked with CDC and partners to hold rabies control workshops in collaboration with U.S. Army veterinarians as part of the USNS Comfort's scheduled stop at Port-au-Prince. The workshops' intent was to raise awareness about rabies, establish a national rabies task force, enhance teachers' roles in preventing rabies among children, and provide rabies education certification for veterinary professionals. During the USNS Comfort's visit in Haiti, CDC and partners vaccinated about 500 dogs against rabies. The Ministry of Health plans to vaccinate 80,000 dogs over the next few weeks.

This year's World Rabies Day theme, End Rabies Together, encourages individuals, businesses, and organizations around the world to work together to end rabies deaths.

Provided by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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