



Rabies in animals

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Content

- Rabies in animals
- Transmission & risk assessment
- Distribution in South Africa
- Prevention & outbreak
Management
- National rabies strategy
- Key points



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THE two most important objectives:

- *Is the puppy vaccinated?
- *Do these children know about rabies?



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Dog – Child – Family – Community - Society



Security/Companionship/Childhood development/Responsibility



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Clinical signs of rabies

- Rabies is a viral disease that affects the brain (encephalitis), eventually causing death.

Clinical signs of disease (general):

- **Changes in behaviour** (e.g. wild animals appear tame or start attacking unprovoked; domestic animals become aggressive or “dumb”/ docile)
- Salivation
- In-coordination, paralysis
- Howling/ vocalization
- “Fly biting”, disorientated
- Gagging, looks like something is stuck in throat



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RABIES SIGNS IN DOGS

Some of the most notable signs of rabies in dogs include:



Excessive salivation

Drool / Saliva dripping from mouth



Lethargy

Abnormally tired



Change in behaviour

Friendly dogs become aggressive /
Aggressive dogs become friendly



Aggression

Unprovoked attacking / Ongoing aggression /
Unusually aggressive behavior



Hallucinations

Barking / Snapping at nothing / Biting objects



Sensitivity to stimuli

Abnormal sensitivity to light / sound / touch



Paralysis / Paresis

Looking unsteady or disorientated
(appearing drunk)



Abnormal vocalization

Change in sound of voice or bark
(as if something stuck in throat)

Image
source:
GARC



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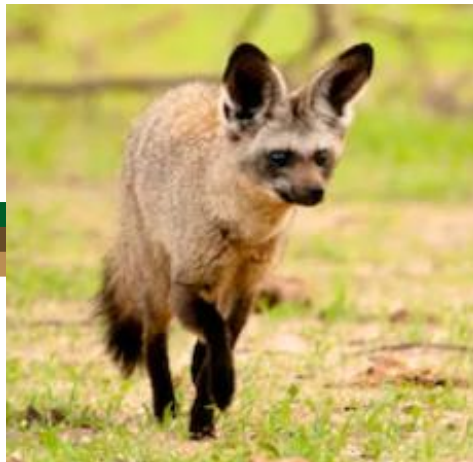




Image: <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity/australia/naqs/naqs-target-lists/rabies>



Image: <https://www.express.co.uk/news/nature/627906/puppies-carrying-rabies-smuggled-Britain>



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All mammals can get rabies, but the biggest threat to humans are DOGS.

Image: <https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/32920/rab-31.jpg?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

Image: <https://www.ajc.com/news/local/three-people-norcross-attacked-rabid-cat/3CFFyPfwhnCcHndSjvmgzN/>



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Image: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/article/2024/jul/11/cape-fur-seals-rabies-surfers-south-africa>

Image: <https://www.thehappychickencoop.com/goat-vaccines/>



Image: <https://za.pinterest.com/pin/672232681860937800/>



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**STAY
SAFE**

VACCINATE TO SAVE SOUTH AFRICA

TOGETHER WE CAN BEAT CORONAVIRUS

How is rabies transmitted?

- Infection usually occurs following a **bite, scratch or lick from an infected animal.**
- The virus is transmitted through the **saliva** of the host animal.
- The host can infect any mammal, including humans.
- In 95% of cases worldwide, the virus is passed to human populations through bites and scratches from **dogs**, but other species such as cats and livestock can become diseased as well and infect humans.



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Risk assessment

- Animal specie (dog vs. cow vs. bat vs. mouse)
- Vaccination status (dogs, cats, livestock)
- Need proof of vaccination & be up to date
- Contact risk – touched animal vs. lick on intact skin vs. bite
- Animal behaviour & any abnormal neuro signs
- Provocation? Breeding season? Aggressive nature?



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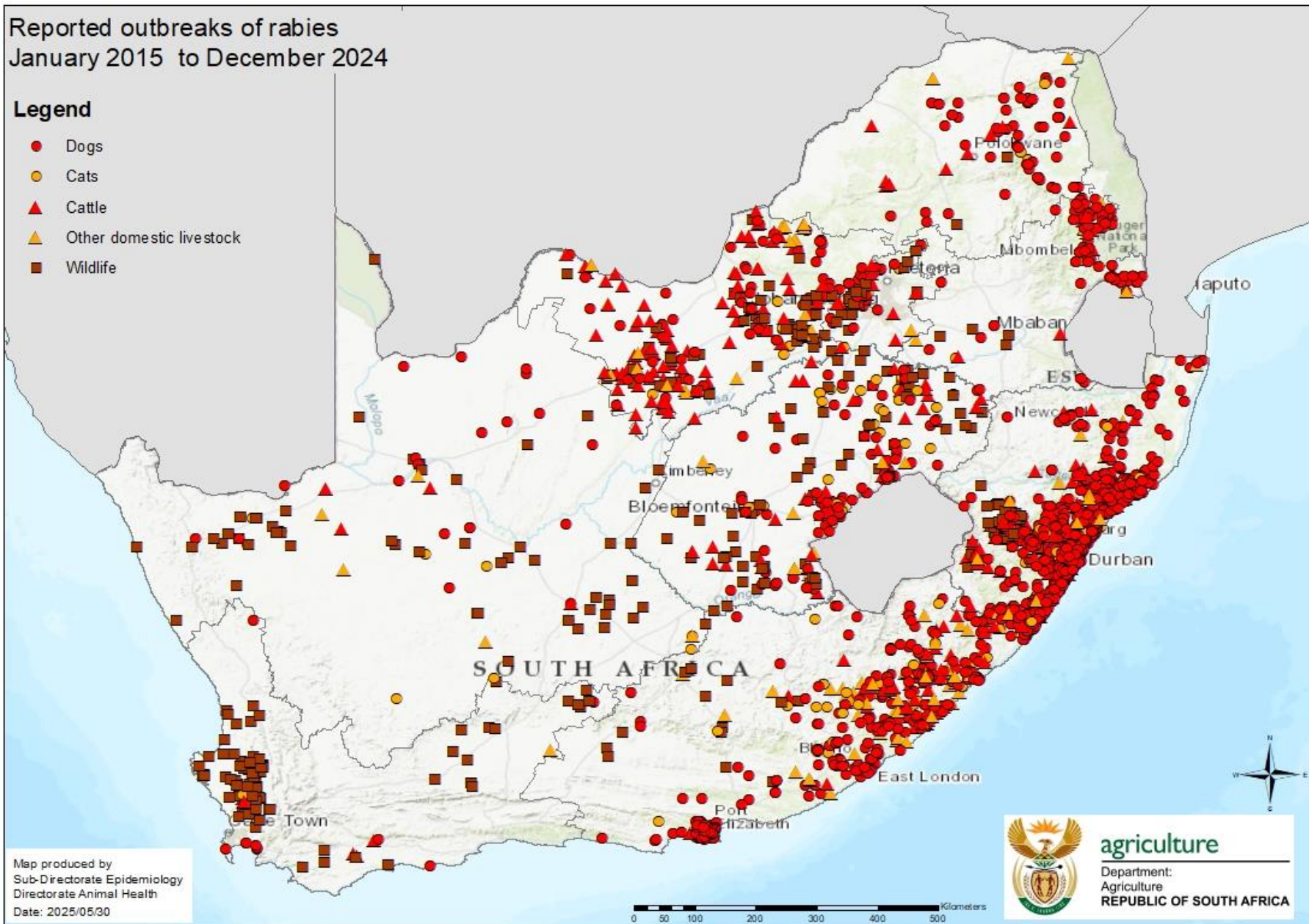
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Reported outbreaks of rabies January 2015 to December 2024

Legend

- Dogs
- Cats
- ▲ Cattle
- ▲ Other domestic livestock
- Wildlife



Map produced by
Sub-Directorate Epidemiology
Directorate Animal Health
Date: 2025/05/30



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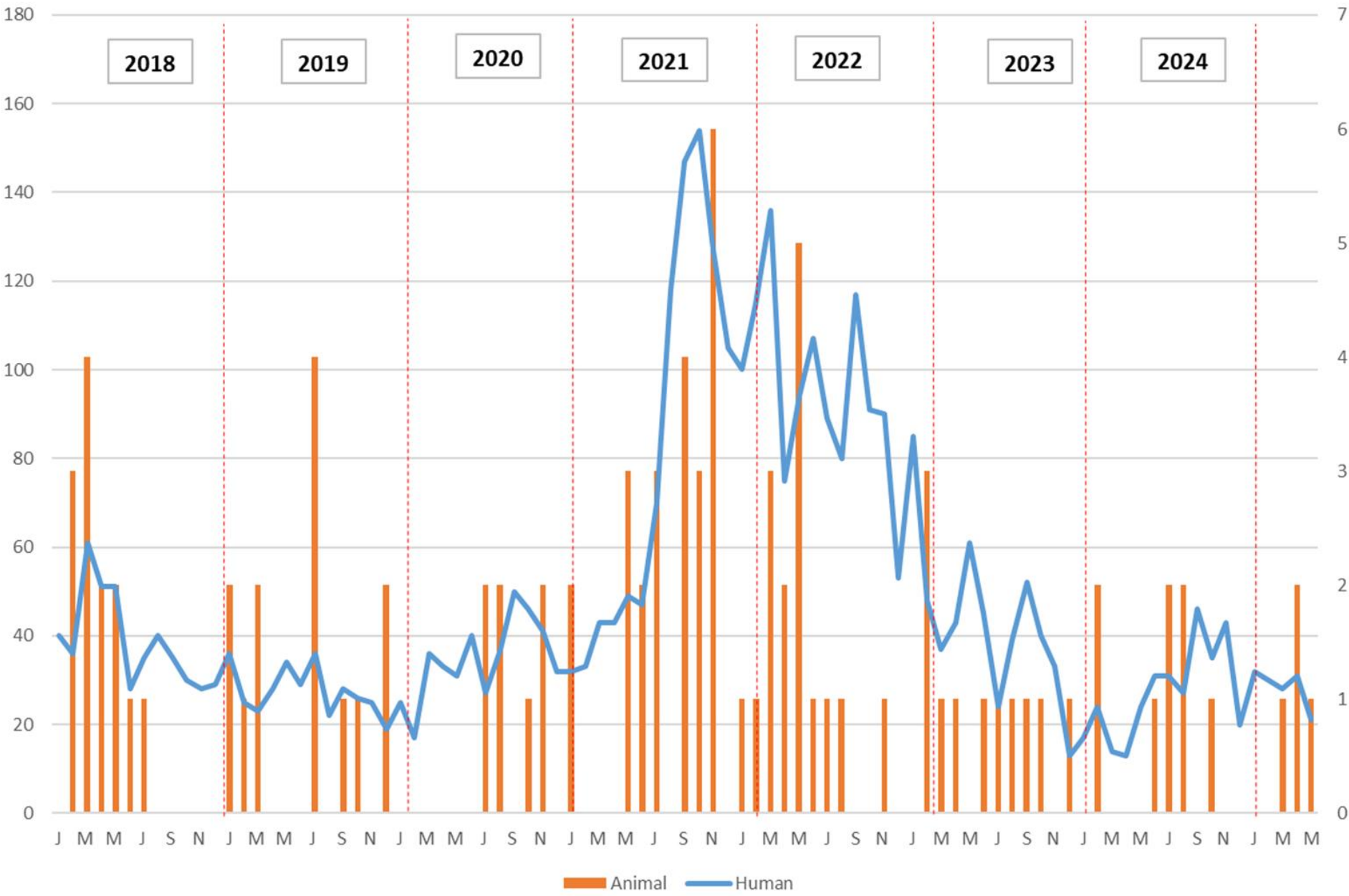


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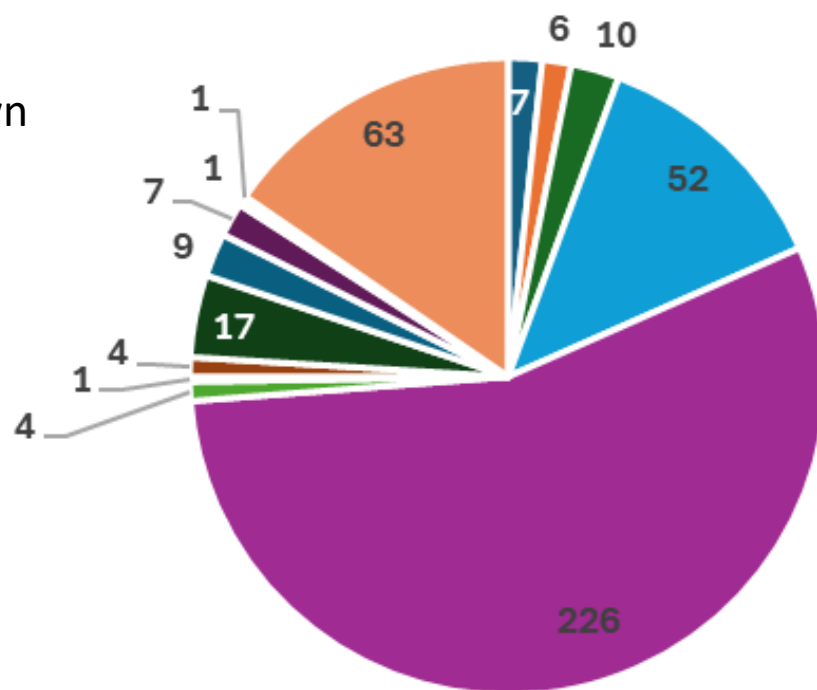


SA Rabies 2018-2025



Jan 2024 – Jun 2025
rabies outbreaks
reported to DOA:
species breakdown

Outbreaks



- Aardwolf
- Bat eared fox
- BB Jackal
- Bovine
- Canine
- Caprine
- Caracal
- Equine
- Feline
- Ovine
- Mongoose
- Serval
- Surricate
- Cape fur seal



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Disease control in animals

- Rabies is a controlled disease under the Animal Diseases Act (Act No. 35 of 1984) and the Animal Diseases Regulations (R.2026 of 1986), which requires immediate (emergency) reporting.
- Control measures are described in Table 2 of the Animal Diseases Regulations.
- **Rabies vaccination of dogs and cats is compulsory in SA!**
- **Suspect Rabies animals are euthanized, and brain samples submitted for Rabies testing (IFA).**



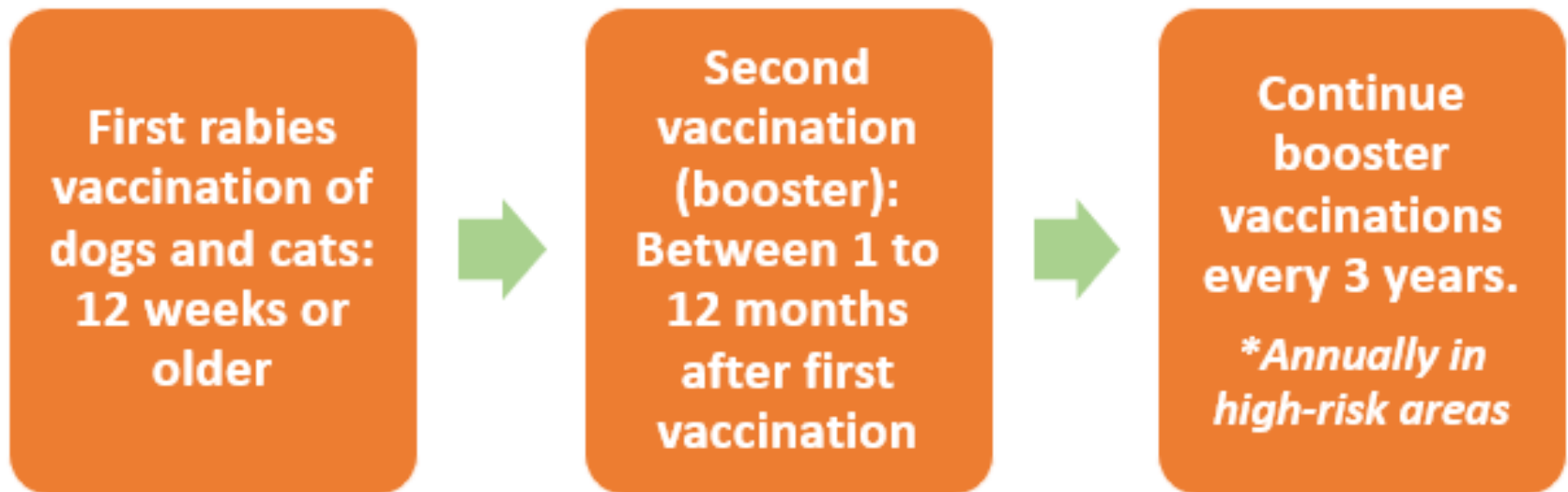
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Disease control in animals

- Basic vaccination schedule for dogs and cats (compulsory)



- Livestock and other mammals can be vaccinated, not compulsory.
- Off-label use in e.g. meerkats, seals, etc. Refer to package insert.



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Disease control in animals

- Animals that were in contact with a rabid animal should be isolated → if they are not vaccinated, they must be euthanized.
- Remember, if your dogs and cats are vaccinated correctly, they cannot get rabies – you therefore protect their lives.
- You and your family/ friends cannot get rabies from your dogs or cats that are correctly vaccinated.

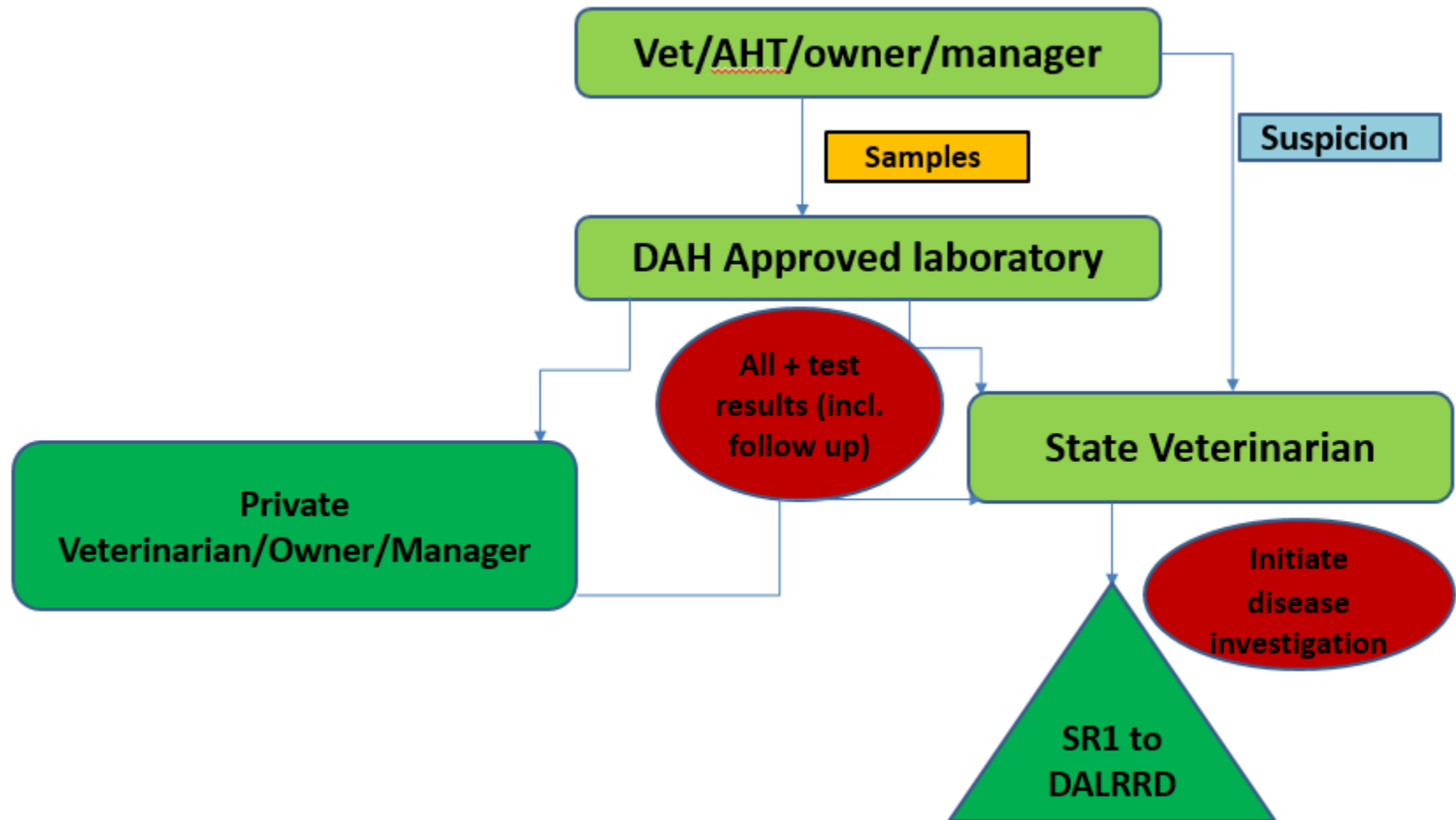


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Reporting of controlled/ notifiable diseases



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Know your state vet!

- **Provincial Veterinary Services contact lists available at:**
<https://www.nda.gov.za/index.php/component/content/article/451-provincial-veterinary-services-contacts>
- Report any animals showing suspect rabies signs if seen, and if patient exposed (bitten, scratched, licked)
- Help with risk assessment & finding dog/ animal for assessment & euthanasia and sampling if needed
- Ring vaccination/ area vaccination if rabies case is identified



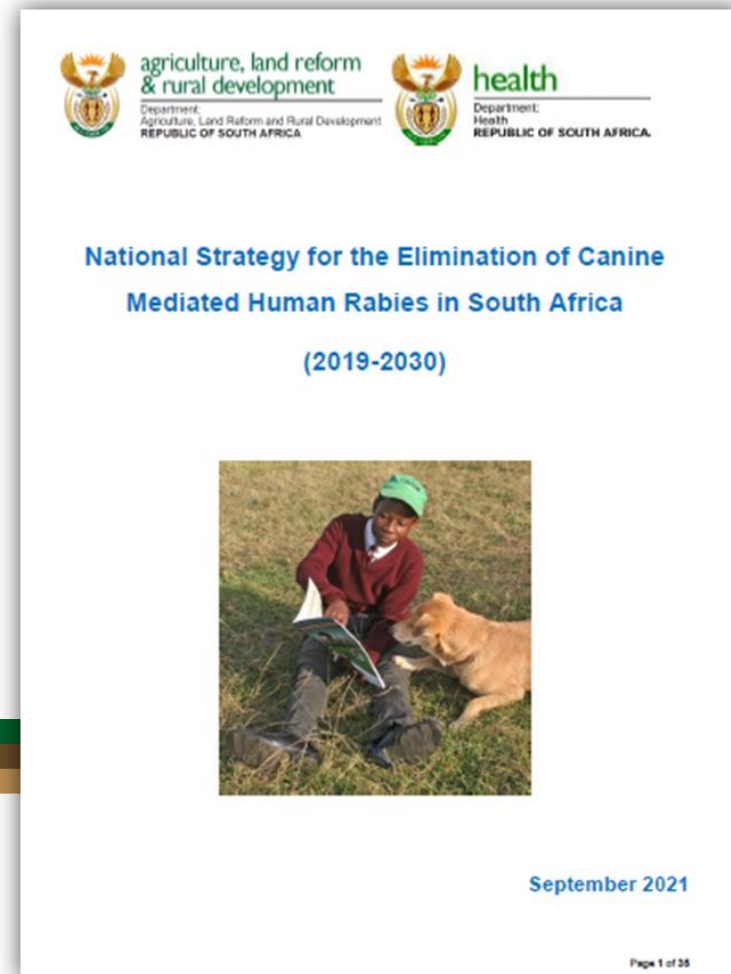
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National Rabies Strategy

- Available at <https://www.nda.gov.za/index.php/publication/425-animal-health-information>
- Given adequate resources and political support, South Africa has the knowledge and practical experience to **eliminate dog mediated human rabies by 2030!**



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Key points of strategy

- **Dog rabies** is found predominantly in four areas in the eastern parts of the country: **LP, KZN, ECP (and FSP-Lesotho border)**
- If these four (five) areas are correctly and strategically vaccinated, it would eliminate more than 90% of dog rabies in RSA and will help achieve the goal of zero human deaths!
- NB to ensure that dog and cat populations are vaccinated to prevent massive outbreaks and human exposures



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Key points

- Across the world, it has been proven that the most cost-effective way to eliminate dog-mediated human rabies is to control and eliminate the disease in the **dog population** through **mass vaccination campaigns**.
- **Children** are usually the household members that care for dogs and take them to vaccination points.
- Children play a huge role in ensuring that dogs (and cats) get vaccinated.
- Unfortunately, children are also at highest risk...



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Any questions?



*Special thanks to Mr Kevin le Roux for several graphs, maps and images



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