



Rabies - and the Afya Serengeti Project from our web site at www.fairfield-vets.co.uk



The very first reference to rabies I can remember was when I was reading an article in a book as a young boy. The chapter went on to discuss why rabies was at that time also known as hydrophobia (literally: fear of water). I always recall being fascinated by this bizarre condition which was responsible for such peculiar, dramatic and lethal consequences.

I am very pleased to say that despite my chosen profession I have, thus far, never seen at firsthand the effects of this horrific disease. Even in 2005 rabies is considered the most dangerous infection that humans can acquire from animals.

Foxes are the main reservoir of infection in Europe and Canada. Whilst dogs remain the most important vector for transmission to humans in developing countries some readers may be surprised to learn that not only are cats more susceptible to the disease but account for more rabid bites to people in the USA than any other species.

Initially clinical signs are non specific: restlessness, anorexia and vomiting. Given that these presenting symptoms account for the majority of unwell patients that I might see you will appreciate how grateful I am that as a result of the UK's rabies free status I do not have to consider this disease as a possibility every time I see an unwell patient!

As the disease progresses and the virus attacks the nervous system a variety of symptoms appear. Paralysis of the lower jaw and the muscles involved in swallowing occurs. This results in the loss of lots of saliva and the inability of the patient to drink despite an apparent thirst thus accounting for the so called "hydrophobia". Cats are far more likely to exhibit viciousness and attack than dogs. Death from respiratory failure then occurs within 3-6 days.



Goldie

As you can imagine, we are keen to protect our rabies free status. Patients like Goldie, who will be holidaying abroad, now have to be vaccinated against this horrific disease.

This article is available on the Fairfield Veterinary Centre web site at www.fairfield-vets.co.uk

You won't care how much we know - until you know how much we care



African wild dog

This year, Fairfield has signed up to a national initiative, being organised by animal health company, Intervet UK, to lend its support to the charitable project 'Afya Serengeti'. This project aims to bring widespread canine vaccination to this famous nature reserve in a bid to eradicate the rabies threat for humans and animals alike.

Every year in Africa up to 25,000 people die from this disease – most of them children.

Rabies is also reported as a major factor in the decline of the highly-endangered African wild dog.



Maasai morani and child carrying their dog to be vaccinated

The biggest problem however, is the growth in population of the prime reservoir for the disease – the domestic dog. And, it's the domestic dog we need to vaccinate to save human and animal lives. For every dose of Nobivac Rabies that the practice uses, Intervet has pledged to send an equal dose to the 'Afya Serengeti' project. This way we are protecting both our own patients and helping to eradicate the disease world-wide.

Photo is of a Maasai morani (warrior) and child embarking on an epic journey, travelling several miles carrying their pet dog to the nearest clinic to get it vaccinated. This is a true reflection of the importance of the human-animal bond in this country and one which we wholeheartedly admire and will help to support.

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