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## **Mission Rabies' Ghana Project Creates Blueprint for Rabies Elimination in West Africa**

Mission Rabies has successfully completed the first district-wide mass dog vaccination campaign in Ghana, demonstrating a proof of concept strategy that could be scaled to make Ghana the first rabies free country in West Africa. The campaign took place during a two-week period in February 2019 and involved the vaccination of more than 4,000 dogs. It was made possible thanks to support from the WSAVA's charitable Foundation.

The Ghana project was run in the Bosomtwe district in response to a significant increase in dog bites in the district over the last three years. Dr Moses Djimatey, District Director of Health, who had worked with the Mission Rabies teams in Malawi in 2018, led the campaign alongside Mission Rabies staff and volunteers. The collaboration of local officials under Djimatey's leadership, alongside the involvement of the regional Veterinary Services Department (VSD), ensured a unique collaboration between the medical and veterinary Government sectors.

Thanks to the support and guidance of regional WHO and FAO officers, the two-week campaign successfully demonstrated the implementation of an economic and effective strategy that enabled the vaccination of 82% of dogs within the district, exceeding the recommended guidelines of 70% coverage to establish herd immunity. International volunteers from a range of countries including Italy, Australia, UK and the US joined the Ghanaian-led teams and in just two weeks, the team vaccinated 4,370 dogs.

Utilising geospatial technology on smartphones, the teams recorded the dog vaccinations on the WVS App which enabled the data to be epidemiologically evaluated, ensuring sufficient cover was achieved and all regions within the district targeted.

Alongside the vaccination campaign, Community Health Officers (CHOs) from the Ghana Health Service worked with the Mission Rabies education teams in delivering rabies awareness lessons to local schools and communities. They helped to raise public awareness of the importance of the vaccination campaign and taught members of the public how to lessen the risk of being bitten by a street dog and the actions to take if they were bitten. According to Mission Rabies, this knowledge can make the difference between life and death in places where rabies vaccine is hard to source.

Luke Gamble, Mission Rabies Founder and CEO said "Expanding into Ghana was a fantastic opportunity and entirely thanks to the incredible support from the WSAVA Foundation. This initiative brought together the medical and veterinary sectors in a rabies endemic country in West Africa and presents a potential blueprint as to how rabies could be eliminated from Ghana and neighbouring regions."

Emeritus Professor Michael J. Day, WSAVA Honorary Treasurer and Mission Rabies Trustee, commented "One of the key pillars of WSAVA activity is contribution to the global campaign for elimination of canine rabies, which is led by the WSAVA Foundation, the One Health Committee and our AFSCAN programme. Over several years our Foundation has provided financial support for Mission Rabies and we have been delighted to partner in this valuable and very successful project in Ghana."

WSAVA Foundation and Mission Rabies were also supported by the African Small Companion Animal Network (AFSCAN), Dogs Trust Worldwide, MSD Animal Health, University of Edinburgh, Worldwide Veterinary service (WVS), WHO, FAO, CDC and the Marchig Trust in running this project – collaboration being a key cornerstone in the global effort to eliminate canine transmitted rabies.

For more information on the work of Mission Rabies visit [www.missionrabies.com](http://www.missionrabies.com)

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#### **Further Information**

Mission Rabies became a registered charity in 2015 but the project began in 2013 under the direction of its sister charity Worldwide Veterinary Service. It aims to eliminate human canine-mediated rabies deaths by 2030. Following World Health Organisation guidelines, it runs mass dog vaccinations and community education campaigns in the world's worst hotspots for the disease. Rabies still claims the lives of approximately 59,000 people annually despite being 100% vaccine-preventable.

The [WSAVA](http://www.wsva.org) aims to advance the health and welfare of companion animals worldwide through creating an educated, committed and collaborative global community of veterinary peers. It represents more than 200,000 veterinarians through 110 member associations. Its charitable [Foundation](http://www.wsva.org/foundation) acquires funds to support activities that can be delivered by clinical and laboratory specialists for the benefit of veterinarians globally. Its AFSCAN initiative is working to advance standards of veterinary care across Africa through education and through facilitating the creation of a sustainable network of companion animal veterinarians, associations and specialist groups in Sub-Saharan Africa.