Strengthening Cooperation and Information Sharing on Rabies among
ASEAN Plus Three Countries

23–25 April 2008, Ha Long, VIET NAM

CALL FOR ACTION

Towards the Elimination of Rabies in the ASEAN Member States
and the Plus Three Countries

WE, THE PARTICIPANTS of the Workshop on Strengthening Cooperation and Information Sharing on Rabies among ASEAN Plus Three Countries, organised by the National Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology, Ministry of Health of Viet Nam, under the ASEAN Plus Three Emerging Infectious Diseases Programme, held in Ha Long, Viet Nam on 23-25 April 2008;

UNITED by the common desire and collective will to eliminate rabies, a neglected and under-reported disease, that kills at least 30,000 people in Asia annually and that at least 40% of these deaths are among children less than 15 years of age;

COMMITTED to working together in the spirit of solidarity and unity to meeting the goal toward eliminating rabies in Asia by 2020;

DETERMINED to contributing to realising an ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community that is socially responsible and having a common identity of a caring and sharing society which is inclusive and where the well-being and welfare of the peoples are enhanced;

AFFIRMED by the Resolution to Eliminate Rabies adopted during the Conference Towards the Elimination of Rabies in Eurasia organised by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the European Union held in Paris, France on 27-30 May 2007;

AGREEING that in the Regional Meeting on Zoonotic Diseases, WHO Regional Office for South East Asia (SEARO) in Jakarta in November 2007, some of the basic principles of zoonoses prevention and control mentioned are applicable to rabies, and likewise, documents, proceedings, developed during the Fourth International Symposium on Rabies Control in Asia in March 2001, Hanoi Vietnam, jointly organized by Fondation Mérieux and WHO; and The Strategies for the Control and Elimination of Rabies in Asia, Report of WHO inter-regional Consultation, held in Geneva, Switzerland in July 2001 contained recommendations and resolutions that focus on rabies in Asia, with the documents having been endorsed by many experts/representatives from ASEAN Member States;
ADHERING to the goal of the ASEAN Plus Three Emerging Infectious Diseases Programme and the strategic vision of the OIE and WHO to reduce the economic, social and disease burden that results from emerging infections that threaten the region by enhancing regional preparedness and capacity through integrated approaches to prevention, surveillance and timely response, and endorsed by the ASEAN Plus Three Health Ministers in Yangon, Myanmar in 2006;

CONVINCED of the need for political commitment and action at the highest level of all ASEAN Plus Three Countries, to consider rabies as one of the priorities and an important emerging and re-emerging disease; and to provide resources for human and animal health services;

ACKNOWLEDGING the socio-economic implications of rabies and its impact to meeting the Millennium Development Goals;

RECOGNISING that animals are living, sentient beings and therefore deserve due consideration and respect and that good animal care reduces the risk of diseases transmissible to humans (zoonoses)

UNDERSTANDING the importance of good veterinary governance for comprehensive and sustainable national programmes for rabies elimination to be designed and implemented;

APPRECIATING the lessons learned and best practices in the rabies control and elimination shared in this Workshop;

HEREBY RECOMMEND the following:

At the National Level

POLICIES/LEGISLATION

- Recognise animal and human rabies as one of the priority diseases for elimination by ASEAN Plus Three countries.
- Establish/strengthen the capacity of the animal health and veterinary public health sectors in affected countries to implement national rabies prevention and control toward elimination of rabies by 2020 in each ASEAN Plus Three country.
- Recognise/focus efforts on elimination of rabies in animals while providing necessary post exposure prophylaxis for human.
- Establish an inter-sectoral steering committee on rabies in each country based on animal, human and eco system health approaches
- Encourage Member States to provide sufficient human and financial resource for animal programmes geared toward elimination of rabies by 2020.
- Establish/enforce policies and legislation on rabies prevention and control taking animal welfare into consideration.

PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF RABIES IN ANIMALS AND PREVENTION IN HUMANS

- Establish/maintain a multisectoral National Steering Committees on rabies.
- Develop and implement an integrated national prevention and control plan on rabies, with sufficient assistance from technical organizations.
- Conduct disease burden assessment due to animal and human rabies should be conducted within each country, with the assistance of technical organizations as
appropriate.

- Adhere to WHO and OIE vaccination guidelines and OIE international standards for prevention and control of the disease.

- Develop and implement strategies for dog management: vaccination, registration and licensing to be covered by legislation, stray dog elimination to be applied in an acceptable humane manner in collaboration with environmental authorities, animal welfare agencies, and involvement of local communities.

- Strengthen capacity of public health workers and medical doctors to appropriately manage animal bites.

- Strengthen the capacity of veterinary services to effectively prevent, control and eliminate rabies.

SURVEILLANCE

- Establish/ maintain or improve the surveillance systems for animal and human rabies with the support of technical organizations.

- Integrate human and animal surveillance systems for regular, systematic sharing of information on rabies.

- Develop laboratory systems at national, sub-national and local levels for rabies diagnosis for both human and animal rabies, with emphasis on animal rabies.

- Encourage active participation of local communities in the surveillance system for rabies.

- Encourage implementation of surveillance on animal population according to OIE guidelines.

- Ensure that all animal/ human rabies cases are investigated through rapid response teams.

INTEGRATION, COORDINATION AND PARTNERSHIP

- Establish/ develop and implement an integrated and multi-sectoral approach in rabies prevention, control and elimination in national programmes.

- Establish/strengthen mechanisms of coordination and communication among stakeholders to ensure efficient and effective implementation of the programmes.

- Enhance partnerships among stakeholders including public, private sectors, NGOs and community groups to ensure sustained support for national programmes.

- Develop national programmes that support community based approaches in prevention and control.

PUBLIC AWARENESS AND COMMUNICATION

- Establish/strengthen coordinated approaches for planning and implementation of effective information, education and communication strategies for rabies prevention and control.

- Encourage development of education programmes for the Promotion of Responsible Ownership in schools and communities.

- Develop IEC materials in an multisectoral, multidisciplinary manner for a more concerted and effective efforts towards public awareness.

- Consider research on dog population dynamics, human-animal interactions, gender and social-cultural factors relevant for development of more effective strategies in the prevention and control of rabies.

At the Regional Level
PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF RABIES IN ANIMALS AND PREVENTION IN HUMANS

- Adopt the WHO target of elimination of rabies by 2020 in the ASEAN Plus Three region.
- Develop a regional strategic framework for prevention and control of rabies in the ASEAN Plus Three region.
- Develop an agreed set of standards for prevention and control of rabies in the ASEAN Plus Three region in accordance and in support of guidelines of WHO and international standards for disease control and surveillance of OIE.
- Consider classifying zones within the region based on the human and animal rabies incidence, and introduce relevant management practices.
- Strengthen capacity through country exchange visits, trainings.
- Provide up-to-date information to the ASEAN Plus Three Countries on vaccine development, new regimens and other developments related to both human and animal rabies.
- Develop common definitions for use in the prevention and control of rabies within the ASEAN Plus Three region.

INFORMATION SHARING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

- Facilitate sharing of information on rabies among the ASEAN Plus Three Countries through a common existing agreed platform.
- Strengthen capacity through country exchange visits and trainings.

INTEGRATION, COORDINATION, COLLABORATION and PARTNERSHIPS

- Establish ASEAN Plus Three framework/strategies to provide guidance for Member States’ cooperation for rabies prevention, control and elimination.
- Strengthen regional advocacy to secure political commitment and resource mobilisation for animal and human rabies.
- Facilitate regular meetings of national steering committees in a regional setting for situation updates, and concerted regional effort for continuing multisectoral engagement.
- Establish a joint agreement between ASEAN, WHO-SEARO and WHO-WPRO, OIE and FAO, that will serve as guidance on the technical coordination.
- Collaborate with technical organisations in providing support to the ASEAN Plus Three countries on establishing or improving the surveillance system, as appropriate.
- Encourage Member States to participate in/organize World Rabies Day on 28 September 2008.

TRAINING

- Develop and conduct training programmes on surveillance, development of rabies communication plans, multisectoral approaches, legislation, and other aspects of rabies prevention and control.

RESEARCH

- Strengthen collaboration on research on epidemiological, laboratory, new technologies and interventions and social and gender aspects of rabies and its prevention and control through regional, sub-regional and twinning partnerships among ASEAN Plus Three Countries.

AND TO THIS END, the Participants in this Workshop, RESOLVED TO SUBMIT this Call for Action for adoption in the next Meeting of the ASEAN Sectoral Working Group on Livestock.
Further, to request the Philippines who will be hosting the 9th ASEAN Health Ministers’ Meeting (9th AHMM) and Cambodia for the ASWGL Meeting to add as an agenda item the rabies Call for Action.

Further, to provide WHO, OIE, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) and other relevant institutions a copy of this Call for Action for their information and action, as appropriate.

Further, to make available a copy of this Call for Action for consideration in the next Inter-Ministerial Meeting on Avian Influenza in Cairo, Egypt for consideration of rabies in the expansion of coverage for other zoonotic diseases.

25 April 2008
Ha Long, Viet Nam