agriculture
Department:
Agriculture
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE URGES SOUTH AFRICANS TO STAND "STRONGER TOGETHER" AGAINST RABIES

South Africa joins the global community on 28 September 2026 to mark World Rabies Day under the theme: "Stronger Together", highlighting that rabies elimination requires collaboration across communities, animal and human health sectors, government and international partners. The Minister of Agriculture, Willie Aucamp, and the Department of Agriculture (DoA) urge South Africans to stand "Stronger Together" in the fight against rabies, emphasising the importance of collaboration, responsible pet ownership, vaccination and prompt action following potential exposure to the disease.

"Rabies is one of the world's deadliest yet most preventable diseases. No one should lose their life to a disease we know how to prevent. Vaccinating dogs and cats, practising responsible pet ownership, reporting suspected cases and seeking prompt medical care after potential exposure are essential to preventing deaths," Minister Aucamp said.
"Through responsible pet ownership and acting quickly, we are "Stronger Together" in the fight against rabies," the minister added.
Working through the National Rabies Advisory Group, South African stakeholders are uniting to raise awareness about rabies and its impact on both animal and public health.

Rabies remains a serious threat across all nine provinces, with significant hotspots in Limpopo (LP), KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) and Eastern Cape (EC).
As of 26 August 2026, South Africa has recorded 15 human rabies deaths since 1 January 2026, including seven confirmed and two probable cases in EC, five confirmed cases in KZN, and one confirmed case in LP. A total of 115 laboratory-positive animal cases were reported from 1 January to 31 July 2026. Everyone is encouraged to contact their local state or private veterinarian, animal health technician or animal welfare organisation for advice and assistance regarding rabies prevention and vaccination. Contact details for provincial veterinary services are available at:

https://www.nda.gov.za/index.php/component/content/article/451-provincial-veterinary-services-contacts

Communities, pet owners, veterinary and para-veterinary professionals, healthcare workers, government departments, policymakers and partner organisations all have a vital role to play in eliminating rabies. Through stronger collaboration and coordinated action, we can prevent rabies, protect lives and move closer to a rabies-free South Africa and world. This is a call to responsibility, urging all of us to make a tangible difference in the fight against this life-threatening disease.

Core rabies messages

- Rabies is almost always fatal once symptoms appear, however, it is preventable.
- Vaccinate dogs and cats regularly to protect pets, families and communities.
- After a bite, scratch or lick from a potentially rabid animal, immediately wash the wound with soap and running water for at least 10 minutes and seek medical attention.
- Post-exposure treatment can prevent rabies when given promptly and correctly.
- Any mammal can contract rabies, including pets, livestock, wildlife and humans.
- Responsible pet ownership and preventing the movement of unvaccinated animals are essential to stopping the spread of rabies.

Follow the hashtag for updates on World Rabies Day during the month of September, using #WorldRabiesDay #WRD2026.

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