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Risk assessment and demographic distribution of canine rabies in plateau state, Nigeria, 2004 to 2009

MB Bolajoko[1, 2], M Ahmed[2], P Okewole[2], M Muhammad[2], P Kumbish[2] and **J Fyfe[1]**
[1]University of Edinburgh, Nigeria
[2]National Veterinary Research Institute, Nigeria

Rabies is one of the most fatal diseases throughout human history and one of the neglected tropical diseases. It is currently estimated that 55,000 people die from rabies annually and over 99% of these deaths occur in Africa and Asia. A retrospective study of the rabies cases reported across Plateaus State, Nigeria to the central diagnostic laboratory (CDL) of the national veterinary research institute, Vom, Nigeria was carried out to assess the risk and identify the pattern of canine rabies distribution in the state. Retrospective data on laboratory-confirmed rabies cases for all 17 local government areas of the state, 2004 – 2009 were retrieved from the record of the CDL. Statistically, analyses of the sourced data were done, and Arc Map 10 was used to produce disease maps of canine rabies across the state. Results revealed 99% of positives for rabies in the state were in dogs and the cases of rabies in cattle and human were associated with dog bites. Geographically, distributions of canine rabies in the state consistently revealed concentration of the disease on the plateaux for each year, 2004 to 2009. Conclusively, canine rabies is well established in Plateau State, Nigeria. This may be attributed to variables that include poor vaccination coverage of dogs, high population of stray dogs and/or low confinement of domestic dogs and the cultural dog-eating habit of the indigenes of the state. The identified risk factors responsible for the observed disease situation in the state were discussed extensively and recommendation were made.

mbbolajoko@gmail.com