3.2.1. What is the role of legislation in the fight against rabies?

In most countries, several laws and by-laws have relevance for rabies control and can provide valuable support for implementing effective programs. For instance, it is important that the Veterinary Services have the authority to enter private and public premises and other establishments where animals are located. The legislation should provide them with the necessary authority to carry out actions needed for the early detection, reporting, notification and rapid and effective management of rabies. Such actions include the capacity to: (1) seize animals, vaccinate, and quarantine (including diagnostic testing and other procedures); (2) control animals at frontiers; and (3) require the humane euthanasia and safe disposal of animals considered to pose a risk of rabies transmission to public health. At the municipal level, a variety of laws can assist in prevention and control of rabies, as described [here](#).

3.2.2. What is the difference between reporting and notification?

Reporting is the act of a clinician/veterinarian/laboratory informing the local health/veterinary agency of a suspected or confirmed case of a disease. Notification is the process of the local health/veterinary agency informing the national health/veterinary agency and to relevant international organisations such as the WHO and the OIE.

3.2.3. Why does rabies need to be a notifiable disease?
Diseases like rabies are highly infectious and severe and affect multiple sectors (domestic animals, wildlife conservation, public health and livestock economies); therefore, it is important to make sure rabies does not spread. When rabies is notifiable in a country, surveillance data can be collected. Better estimates of the number of cases can then be made, ensuring a more accurate evaluation of the rabies burden in an area. Rabies needs to be reported so that infected animals can be swiftly identified, isolated and removed, reducing its socioeconomic impact and the risk of disease contraction in animals and humans. Surveillance data will also provide public health professionals with critical information to make informed decisions about saving human lives. For instance, in a number of countries, notification is used by health authorities to investigate possible exposures and organize post-exposure prophylaxis, quarantine and other disease containment measures. Rabies reporting and notification are also of value for the rapid identification of foci and the implementation of control measures if needed. Surveillance of human and animal cases includes reporting of suspect cases (based on the history and clinical symptoms/signs) as well as collection of samples for laboratory confirmation. Surveillance measures should also include reporting of human exposures by suspect rabid animals and post-exposure doses administered. Click here for more information on rabies surveillance strategies.

3.2.4. Which factors are important in deciding whether a disease is notifiable?

The spread and the severity of the disease and risk to human and animal health are important factors in identifying a disease as notifiable. Rabies has the highest case fatality rate of any diseases known to infect humans and animals: it is virtually 100% fatal once symptoms are present. Another factor is disease prevention and control. Human rabies is preventable and dog rabies is controllable. When a disease becomes notifiable, it is subject to particular laws and controls, and financial resources should be allocated to its prevention/control/elimination. To see the other benefits of rabies notification, see Section 6.1 and Section 6.2 in the Rabies Surveillance Blueprint.

3.2.5. Is/should rabies in humans be a notifiable disease in my country?

Yes, making rabies in humans a notifiable disease will improve surveillance efforts. Functional diagnostic services are a precondition for notification of human rabies and human rabies cases should be systematically investigated to identify contacts. All medical practitioners should be aware of the list of nationally or sub-nationally notifiable diseases that infect humans. The local (district level) or national public health authorities can provide more detailed information. Timely response to surveillance activities and notification of results will motivate field and hospital staff to continue reporting cases. Responses to notification should include, at a minimum, prompt acknowledgement of reports, feedback on results of diagnostic tests and advice on management of cases and outbreaks. Follow-up of notifications will improve both case for management and
surveillance activities (as detailed in the 2013 WHO Expert Consultation Report). More guidance on human rabies surveillance is provided in Section 2.2 of the Rabies Surveillance Blueprint.

3.2.6. Is/should rabies in animals be a notifiable disease in my country?

Yes. All veterinary practitioners should be aware of the list of nationally or sub-nationally notifiable diseases that infect animals, of particular public health importance or diseases that are transmitted from animals to humans, such as rabies. The local (district level) or national veterinary services can provide more detailed information. If an animal rabies case is suspected or confirmed, in most countries, the public health/veterinary authorities (alternatively the next level) must be notified immediately. At the international level, rabies is an OIE-listed disease. Countries that are members of the OIE are therefore recommended to regularly report on the rabies situation in domestic and wild animals, including disease control measures.

Map showing the countries where animal rabies is a notifiable disease according to national veterinary legislation (2014)

Maps and information on whether rabies is a notifiable disease at the national level and for which animal species rabies is notifiable by national legislation are available at the OIE website. For trade purposes, it is crucial to know for which species notification and control measures are required by the national legislation.
National veterinary services should aim for official notification of rabies occurrence at the international level (OIE and regional organisations) for both domestic and wild animals. Countries are strongly encouraged to notify international authorities of all rabies outbreaks, in particular dog rabies because it is the source of infection for the majority of human rabies cases. The frequency of notification depends on the epidemiological situation of rabies in the country. OIE recommends that countries submit a report every six months on their sanitary situation for all OIE listed diseases for both domestic and wild animals. If rabies is present in a country in domestic or/wild animals, all animal rabies cases should be included in these reports. However, immediate notification may be triggered by unusual epidemiological events such as the first occurrence of the disease, the occurrence of a new rabies virus species, marked increase in incidence, marked changes in clinical signs/virulence, and spill-over into a species or area not formerly affected. Similarly, in a country where rabies is generally absent (rabies-free or only a few episodes) every new outbreak not connected to a former one should be notified immediately. Read [here](#) about provisions on notification obligations of OIE members. More guidance on animal rabies surveillance is provided in Section 2.3 of the Rabies Surveillance Blueprint.

### 3.2.7. How do I notify authorities of a rabies case?

For a human rabies case:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country X</th>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Notifiable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cattle</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Buffaloes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dogs</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Goats</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cervidae</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Camelidae</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Equidae</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cats</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hares / rabbits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sheep / goats</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sheep</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Swine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wild species</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example of a country and species table showing where legislation governs the obligatory notification of animal rabies cases
The Board of Health, upon receiving a report of a suspect or confirmed human case of rabies, should immediately report to the Ministry of Health. The notification should be made verbally, and data pertaining to each human case should be reported by any other method specified by the ministry within 24 hours of notification.

For an animal rabies case:

Country veterinary services should be immediately contacted to request advice on the most appropriate method to notify a suspected or a confirmed case of rabies in animals. For the purpose of notification to the OIE, the veterinary authorities shall send the information to the OIE Headquarters through the World Animal Health Information System (WAHIS). More information are available at the OIE website.

For further detail on what information should be included in the report, see Section 6.4 of the Rabies Surveillance Blueprint.

3.2.8. Are/should animal-bite injuries be notifiable?

Notification of animal-bite injuries involving the collection and analysis of bite related data for all centrally reported human exposures should be encouraged. In many situations, the accurate investigation and laboratory confirmation of human bites from suspected rabid animals (post-bite clinical examination and observation for at least 10 days) will be impractical. However, reports of human exposures by suspect rabid animals, including information on bite victims, animal characteristics (e.g. species, owned or unowned), bite characteristics, type of exposure and treatment provided, should be systematically recorded by the clinic, and reported and notified to local and national public health authorities. An increase in the number of bites by suspect rabid animals in a region can be indicative of an increased risk of rabies circulating in a population. Similarly, a decrease of reported cases can be expected as a consequence of a successful rabies control programme. See Section 5.9 of the Rabies Surveillance Blueprint for further information.
3.2.9. How do I make rabies a notifiable disease in my country?

Procedures for adoption of (public and animal health) legislation vary considerably from country to country. International standards should be considered by the political and administrative organization of a country during the process of elaborating its legislation on notifiable diseases. Refer to Section 3.1 of the Rabies Surveillance Blueprint for more information on implementing the legal framework necessary for adequate rabies surveillance.

- **Rabies in humans** - Human rabies must be notifiable under federal health regulations applied by the Ministry of Health, as explained in Chapter 11 of the 2013 WHO Expert Consultation on Rabies.

- **Rabies in domestic animals** - In the establishment of legislation for compulsory notification of rabies, both the Ministries of Health and Agriculture are usually involved, in some cases with specialized advice from inter-ministerial /inter-departmental zoonosis committees. The political commitment to create or adjust legislation on rabies could be strengthened by pressure from the general public, media attention, human and animal health sectors, but also by local governments (particularly those affected by dog rabies), by the Ministry of Environment (in particular, wildlife conservation agencies) and by authorities of the public order (e.g. police). Many international and regional organisations (e.g. OIE, WHO, PAHO, UEMOA) have programmes to assist countries in updating and regionally harmonizing their legislation, including legislation on rabies notification.

3.2.10. How is the legislation to support rabies control elaborated and implemented?
Veterinary legislation varies greatly from country to country and implementation depends on good veterinary governance. At the international level, the OIE can assist its member countries in revising and adjusting veterinary legislation through the Performance of Veterinary Services (PVS) Pathway and the Veterinary Legislation Support Programme that includes specific tools to evaluate the level of compliance of national veterinary services with OIE international standards.

3.2.11. What laws and by-laws may be useful in ensuring a successful dog rabies control programme?

Laws and regulations relevant to dog rabies control programmes may include responsible dog ownership (including mandatory registration and identification, and vaccination requirements), regulations on the breeding and sale of dogs, control/removal of unowned dogs, control of dog movements/relocations, tie-up orders, regulations to control rubbish disposal and disposal of waste at facilities that may produce offal (e.g. slaughter houses, fisheries, dairy farms), abandonment legislation, and dog culling. In many countries some of these laws exist, but there may not be compliance. Successful enforcement can be achieved through education about legislation at all levels (from law enforcement bodies to relevant professionals and the general public who need to be aware of laws in order to comply). An example of a programme where legislation enforcement has benefited a control programme comes from Kisumu, Kenya.

3.2.12. What laws and recommendations are available for dog importation?

Veterinary Services and, depending on the country, Customs Services have a key role in preventing introduction of rabies into rabies free areas or into a rabies free country. Any country should have legislation specifying the requirements for live dog importation. General recommendations on safe dog importation are described in the provisions on trade with dogs available here. Model veterinary certificates provided by the veterinary authority of the exporting country for importation of dogs and cats, in particular from rabies affected countries, are available here.

3.2.13. What laws and recommendations are available for dog identification and registry?
Veterinary authorities, along with other relevant governmental agencies and in consultation with stakeholders, may establish a legal framework for the implementation and enforcement of a dog identification system, at the individual dog level or at the municipal level. The structure of this framework will vary from country to country and the rabies epidemiological situation (e.g. rabies elimination programmes in the planning, starting, ongoing or achieved phases). Each country should design a programme in accordance with the scope and relevant criteria to ensure that dogs are registered and can be traced. Dog identification may serve to distinguish between vaccinated and non-vaccinated populations or animals, trace dog owners in the event of a biting incident or re-trace a notorious, free-roaming dog. Animal identification, stray dog population control, traceability and movement should be under the responsibility of Veterinary Services. Recommendations on how to address stray and feral dog populations is available here.

The legal framework for dog identification should include:
- Desired outcomes and scope.
- Obligations of the veterinary authority and other parties (municipalities, police, owners).
- Organizational structures and the choice of technologies and methods used for dog identification.
- Management of dog movement within the country and between countries, seasonal restrictions etc.
- Confidentiality of data on dogs and owners (i.e. who has access to the data).
- Checking, verification, inspection of dog identification and possible penalties.
- Funding mechanisms and arrangements to support a pilot project on dog identification, where relevant.

3.2.14. Is dog vaccination compulsory?

Dog vaccination is the most cost-effective, single intervention at source to protect humans from contracting rabies. High-quality vaccines are available. Vaccine coverage needs to reach at least 70% of the canine population in order to break the cycle of transmission from dogs to humans.
Dog vaccination is the only way to break the rabies infection cycle in dogs and to humans. In some countries rabies vaccination and individual dog registration and identification are mandatory. Depending on the circumstances, changes to legislation regarding rabies vaccination should be considered, keeping in mind that these legislative changes are often slow and difficult to enforce.

Photo courtesy of the Society of Animal Well-Being of Lusaka and by the Department of Veterinary Medicine of the University of Lusaka

3.2.15. What emergency orders might apply in the case of unexpected outbreaks?

Emergency rings vaccinations and registration and marking of unvaccinated animals. More information is available [here](www.caninerabiesblueprint.org).