RECOMSA seminar dedicated to the communication strategy, awareness and training on rabies for Maghreb countries
4-5 November 2015 – Tunis, Tunisia

1. Do you know the number of human rabies cases that have occurred in your country during the last three years?
   human cases: yes: 43% (n=6)  
   no: 50% (n=7)  
   partially: 7% (n=1)
   dog cases: yes: 31% (n=4)  
   no: 46% (n=6)  
   partially: 23% (n=3)

Depending on the information available, please fill the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of human cases</th>
<th>Number of dog cases</th>
<th>Number of dog bites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>n=10</td>
<td>n=9</td>
<td>n=8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>n=11</td>
<td>n=9</td>
<td>n=10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>n=11</td>
<td>n=10</td>
<td>n=8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>n=10</td>
<td>n=8</td>
<td>n=5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The answers are mostly exact or very close to real data. The numbers are quite stable over the period.

Examples of answers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number of human cases</th>
<th>Number of dog cases</th>
<th>Number of dog bites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>≈ 20</td>
<td>≈ 300 - 350</td>
<td>≈ 120 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>≈ 20</td>
<td>≈ 60 - 100</td>
<td>≈ 50 000 - 60 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>≈ 5</td>
<td>≈ 200 - 300</td>
<td>≈ 40 000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of dog bites and therefore post-exposure treatment is very high (very high cost).

Do the media cover the occurrence of human rabies cases in your country?
   yes: 62% (n=8) – no: 23% (n=3) – I don't know: 15% (n=2)
If yes, through which media (TV news, radio, press, social networks…)? And how often (every time a new case occurs, not always, from time to time depending on the news ...)?

Ranking of the media used to cover information relating to rabies cases in terms of frequency: **social networks and newspapers (1st) – television (3rd) – radio (4th)**.

Details of the results: **social networks (73% / n = 8) mainly for each new case (n = 7) – newspapers (73% / n = 8) systematically for each new case (n = 3) or from time to time depending on the news (n = 4) – television (64% / n = 7) for each new case (n = 2) or from time to time depending on the news (n = 4) – radio (64% / n = 7) from time to time depending on the news (n = 4)**.

2. Are you aware of human rabies cases detected when tourists or other visitors return to their country of origin after visiting your country? Are you aware of rabies cases detected in a third country in dogs coming from your country?

**human cases (tourists or other visitors) :**

- yes: 8% (n=1)
- no: 69% (n=9)
- I don’t know: 23% (n=3)

**dog cases (“imported” dogs or dogs that have stayed in your country) :**

- yes: 8% (n=1)
- no: 62% (n=8)
- I don’t know: 31% (n=4)

If yes, through which media (TV news, radio, press, social networks…)? And how often (every time a new case occurs, not always, from time to time depending on the news ...)?

Information on rabies cases concerning tourists or dogs that have stayed in a country where rabies is present is not well reported in the media. Media quoted (only 3 answers): TV and newspapers (66% / n = 2) – radio and social networks (33% / n = 1).

3. Are data available concerning the number of stray dogs in your country?

- yes: 7% (n=1)
- no: 50% (n=7)
- I don’t know: 43% (n=6)

In your opinion, in the absence of data (if you have answered "no" or "I don’t know"), do you have the feeling that the number of stray dogs is increasing in your country?

- yes: 71% (n=10)
- no: 0% (n=0)
- I don’t know: 29% (n=4)
Is there an administrative department in charge of stray dogs control in your country?

**yes: 71% (n=10)** – no: 14% (n=2) – I don’t know: 14% (n=2)  

.......... If yes, please mention which administrative department(s) is (are) in charge of stray dogs management:

**Ministry of Interior (50% / n=7) and municipalities and local authorities** – municipalities (43% / n=6) – Ministry of Livestock (7% / n=1).

Comments:

The department in charge of the management of stray dogs is well known (quoted in 100% of responses).

However, the number of stray dogs is poorly known, the communication implemented by the department in charge of the management of stray dogs needs to be improved.

Several answers (n = 4) specify that the management of stray dogs has been worst for the last few years, it is neglected and should be improved.

Depending on the information available, please provide details about the number of stray dogs and dogs with or without identified owners in your country in recent years:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of dogs with owners</th>
<th>Number of stray dogs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>n=5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>n=4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>n=5</td>
<td>n=1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>n=4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data concerning dogs with owners are well known in some countries (eg. between 550 000 and 671 000 dogs in Tunisia). Almost no data available concerning the number of stray dogs.

In your opinion, is the stray dogs population an issue in your country?

**yes: 73% (n=8)** – no: 9% (n=1) – I don’t know: 18% (n=2)

Is there an increase in dog bites or complaints related to stray dogs in your country?

**yes: 78% (n=7)** – no: 11% (n=1) – I don’t know: 11% (n=1)

Please mention the possible negative impacts caused by stray dogs in your country (dog bites, noisy barking, livestock attacks, traffic accidents):
Many negative impacts were reported: **increase in dog bites (82% / n = 9)** especially in rural or peri-urban areas – noise that can lead to a feeling of fear in children or even panic in territories where problems occur (64% / n = 7), attacks of livestock (55% / n = 6) or dogs owned by owners (9% / n = 1), road accidents (45% / n = 5), potential impact on animal diseases prevalence: hydatid cyst, rabies... (18% / n = 2), negative impact on tourism and establishment of foreign companies (9% / n = 1), impact on household waste which are scattered by stray dogs (9% / n = 1), negative impact on mass vaccination campaigns implementation (9% / n = 1)... 

4. In your opinion, is household waste management an issue in your country? Is household waste management considered to be an issue in your country?

   **yes: 77% (n=10)** – no: 8% (n=1) – I don’t know: 15% (n=2)

Which administrative department(s) is (are) in charge of household waste management in your country?

   **Municipalities (87% / n=13) under the authority of the Ministry of Interior (n=5)** – Ministry of Interior (13% / n=2).

In your opinion, do you think there are links between stray dogs and household waste management issues?

   **yes: 100% (n=11)** – no: 0% (n=0) – I don’t know: 0% (n=0)

        Comments : 

The departments in charge of stray dogs management or household waste management are well identified and are in most cases the same.

All of the answers show that the problem of stray dogs and household waste management are linked.

Some answers indicate that **household waste is a potential source of food for these dogs that gather around dumping grounds (25% / n = 3)**, particularly slaughterhouse waste (n = 1), the number of stray dogs seems directly correlated to the household waste management problems (17% / n = 2), particularly in urban or peri-urban areas, that these stray dogs can be dangerous (17% / n = 2) and that services that are in charge of their management must take appropriate measures (17% / n = 2), these two problems can lead to public health issues that will expose primarily children (8% / n = 1).

5. Is there a structure at national level to coordinate the control of zoonoses and especially rabies in your country, such as a "National Commission for the fight against rabies" or an "Interministerial Committee for the fight against zoonoses" (or any other structure in charge of the fight against zoonoses, especially rabies)?

   **yes: 60% (n=6)** – no: 20% (n=2) – I don’t know: 20% (n=2)

        If yes, please identify its members?
Ministry of Health (100% / n=9) – Ministry of Interior (100% / n=9) – Ministry of Agriculture (100% / n=9) – Veterinary School (44% / n=4) – Pasteur Institute (22% / n=2) – Ministry of Environnement (11% / n=1) – Ministry of Religious Affairs (11% / n=1) – Ministry of Education (11% / n=1).

Are there other actors or structures in charge of management of zoonoses, especially rabies, in your country (NGOs, associations…)?

yes: 44% (n=4) – no: 22% (n=2) – I don’t know: 33% (n=3)

If yes, please provide the relevant names and describe these actors or structures:

Other actors: veterinary associations or veterinary students associations (89% / n=8) – animal health surveillance centre (11% / n=1) – NGO (11% / n=1) – civil society (11% / n=1) – imams (11% / n=1).

6. In recent years, has a/several communication campaign(s) been implemented on rabies in your country?

yes: 55% (n=6) – no: 27% (n=3) – I don’t know: 18% (n=2)

If yes, have you actively participated in one (or more) communication campaign(s)?

yes: 86% (n=6) – no: 14% (n=1)

If no, please mention the organiser(s).

Most of the answers concern participants who have actively collaborated on communication campaigns concerning rabies: Ministry of Agriculture (n=6) – Ministry of Education (n=2) – Ministry of Interior (n=2) – Pasteur Institute (n=2) – Ministry of Health (n=1) – private veterinarians (n=1). The Ministry of Agriculture was quoted as an organiser of a communication campaign on rabies by someone belonging to another structure.

Please mention and describe example(s) of communication campaign(s) implemented in your country in recent years on rabies (or concerning another disease of animal origin):

Communication campaigns on rabies are regularly organised in some countries (Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia): free vaccines for dogs, participation in the World Rabies Day. The media used are multiple: TV spots, leaflets, stickers, posters... The main targets: dog owners, general public, school children...

More and more joint actions between the different actors involved are desired.

Communication activities on rabies predominantly involve the Ministry of Agriculture alone or in collaboration with other structures (Ministry of Health, Pasteur Institute, veterinary associations...).
7. Are communication campaigns developed internally within your organisation?

yes: 60% (n=6) – no: 10% (n=1) – I don’t know: 30% (n=3)

If yes, please mention which administrative department(s) is (are) in charge of communication, especially on public health issues and rabies in particular:

Animal health department of the Ministry of Agriculture (43% / n=3) – risk prevention department of Ministry of Health (43% / n=3) – focal point on communication (29% / n=2) – department in charge of zoonoses control (14% / n=1) – communication manager of the ministry (14% / n=1).

If no, what is the established procedure to implement communication campaigns?

Do you regularly use an external service provider, such as a communications agency, to implement communication campaigns?

yes: 11% (n=1) – no: 44% (n=4) – I don’t know: 44% (n=4)

If yes, on which subjects? Please mention examples of communication campaigns implemented by the external service provider (communications agency):

Main subject: vaccination against rabies. Main media used: TV spot, radio spot, posters.

If no, for what reasons (budget, task carried out internally...)?

Communication campaigns are carried out internally by choice (20% / n = 1) or for budgetary reasons: lack of budget (80% / n = 4).

Is it planned for or likely to happen in the future?

yes: 43% (n=3) – no: 0% (n=0) – I don’t know: 57% (n=4)

Comments:

Communication campaigns are not externally implemented due to lack of specific or overall budget (n = 2) – or lack of good communication agencies offering interesting ideas on a topic considered difficult (n = 1).

Wish to implement communication campaigns involving all the actors at the national level, but also at the regional level with several countries.
8. Have you ever participated in a communication campaign for the general public, children, schools, religious authorities?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>78% (n=7)</td>
<td>22% (n=2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>88% (n=7)</td>
<td>13% (n=1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>86% (n=6)</td>
<td>14% (n=1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imams</td>
<td>29% (n=2)</td>
<td>71% (n=5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If yes (even in the case of answering "yes" once), on what topics? Please briefly describe the communication campaign(s) in question:

Vaccination against rabies (n = 3) – awareness on rabies (n = 2), and in particular towards children (n = 1) – post-exposure rabies treatment (n = 1) – World Rabies Day – zoonoses: rabies, hydatid disease, brucellosis, tuberculosis, leishmaniasis... (n = 4) and the economic loss due to zoonoses control (n = 1) – animal health: Avian influenza, tuberculosis, foot and mouth disease, brucellosis, bluetongue... (n = 2) – food safety: food poisoning... (n = 2) – veterinary medicine (n = 1) – veterinary public health (n = 1) – the way to behave with animals (n = 1) – household waste management (n = 1) – vector borne diseases (n = 1)...

Have you already faced any particular difficulties relating to these specific audiences?

Some problems were encountered, including the total ignorance of certain public about the risk due to certain diseases such as rabies, or about sensitive species or risk of transmission.

A need to harmonise the messages and adapt the targets was expressed by several participants.

9. In your opinion, do you think the tone of a campaign (shock campaign, scary pictures, games for children...) to communicate about rabies is important?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
<th>Don’t know (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>100% (n=7)</td>
<td>0% (n=0)</td>
<td>0% (n=0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments (examples: the message should be adapted to the audience targeted, some ideas were considered too shocking in the context of the drafting of previous campaigns, classic communication on rabies is no longer effective, it is not a good idea to use scary pictures of dogs in countries where people are often feared by the population...)

Mostly, the answers indicate that the tone of a communication campaign must be adapted to the target audience. In the case of rabies, it should not blame the people, to give emphasis to the education of children, to communicate with families in order to encourage them to listen and to repeat at home the message heard at school...

The need for harmonization of messages and collaboration between all stakeholders for a concerted and effective action was highlighted.
10. Have you already faced any particular difficulties to communicate on rabies in your country?

**yes: 63% (n=5) – no: 38% (n=3)**

If yes, please mention the difficulties that you have already identified to communicate on rabies in your country (internal or external difficulties, lack of financial resources...):

Difficulties identified: lack of budget resources (n = 2) and qualified personnel (n = 1) – lack of credibility of the administration (n = 1) – communication problem with the communications agency responsible for developing media communication (n = 1) – total ignorance of the population concerning rabies (n = 1) – internal communication problems (n = 1).

In your opinion, what did you identify as factors limiting efficient communication on rabies in your country?

Identified limiting factors: lack of motivation of people in charge of implementing communication campaigns (n = 2), decision-makers to allocate funds to communicate (n = 2) and the public (n = 2) – problem of credibility of administrative services concerned (n = 1) – budget problem (n = 3) – lack of human resources (n = 1) – internal communication problems within the same department and between different ministries – isolated communication actions ineffective (n = 1) that should be incorporated in an overall communication plan (n = 1).

**Expectations:**

- effectively use available tools of communication and learn about the new communication tools
- increase knowledge about the best tools useful to communicate on rabies
- increase knowledge and skills on the communication strategy for an effective and beneficial awareness towards the different audiences
- need to share with other participants and learn from the experiences of other countries
- better know some partners within the same country and try to have a common approach
- improve knowledge of rabies by the general public and especially children and awareness of risk caused by stray dogs
- learn to communicate with decision makers to gain their support and their effective involvement to implement an effective communication strategy on rabies
- convince all stakeholders of the major role of communication in the fight against rabies
- develop a communication strategy adapted to the national context of each country
- implement an harmonised awareness strategy on rabies at the regional level