

N51  
27/9/15



# HOW TO KEEP A TIGHT LEASH ON RABIES

REPORTS BY AUDREY VIJANDREN ON PAGES 12 & 13;  
OP-ED ON PAGE 20; LETTERS ON PAGE 24

**BUSINESS AS USUAL IN  
PETALING STREET**

→ PAGE 10; VIEWPOINT ON PAGE 20

**SLOW AND LEISURELY  
LIFE OF THE JAHAI**

→ PAGES 32 & 33

**ROONEY STEERS  
MAN UNITED TO THE TOP**

→ PAGE 59

12 NEW SUNDAY TIMES SEPTEMBER 27, 2015

## NEWS

# Handling rabies

**FATAL BITES:** More than 55,000 people in the world die of rabies annually and 95 per cent occur in Asia and Africa. Between 30 and 60 per cent of fatalities are children below 15. Audrey Vijandren speaks to vets, shelter owners and animal lovers about the rabies outbreak

**T**HE rabies outbreak is causing many people to fear dogs. The majority of human rabies cases among children are not recognised and go unreported, resulting in a much higher risk of complications and deaths.

However, dog lovers say, with proper care and safety measures, there is little to worry about.

Anand Palaniappan, of Facebook page PetsNotHomeAlone, who looks after pets when their owners are away, says education was key.

"Some have called for licensed dogs to be kept indoors and strays to be put to sleep because of the rabies outbreak."

"I think it's a knee-jerk reaction. It makes more sense to educate dog owners and the public. For instance, kids need to learn what to do and what not to do with dogs."

"Dogs are known as man's best friend. From my point of view, this is



100 per cent true. But people need to be educated."

He said rabies was mainly spread through dog bites.

He said infected dogs did not lick other dogs.

"As a rule, pet owners must leash their dogs while outdoors — most importantly for their pets' safety and third parties concerned.

"A stray dog is more afraid of you than you are of it. Don't antagonise it, leave it alone.

"Stray dogs are hungry, scared and live in fear of being abused.

"So, if you want to be a good Samaritan and feed it, just put the food down and leave. Don't hold or touch the dog.

"Most of the time, if you don't run, they won't chase you.

"But, if you are chased, stand your ground, raise your voice, use your arms and shout 'Hey! Hey!' with authority.

"The dog will stop. Then, and only then, back away slowly."

Some believe in training dogs through harsh old-school techniques, but Anand said the best way was to use exercise, discipline and affection, and in that order.

"Dogs have needs. If these needs are met, they will add value.

"Dogs, like people, can suffer psychologically.

"If they are constantly caged, neglected, abused, malnourished and unloved, they may exhibit bad behaviour."

Lost Animal Souls Shelter (LASS) founder and president Vignes Cheliah felt the same way.

"We have to realise that the difference between a pet dog and a stray dog is just that the stray dog was born into an unfair life situation and has yet to find a home.

"The idea that if they aren't owned they should be killed is a barbaric way of thinking.

"Prevention may be better than cure, but if prevention means the mass murder of innocent lives, is it really better?

"Most of the dogs that are being killed do not even carry the disease. There is an alternative and less barbaric method to handle this — mass



vaccinations.

"Yet this method is not employed because it is less convenient.

"This is simply unacceptable. Humans have to be the voice for the voiceless."

She said the outbreak should have been nipped in the bud.

"There was a report that rabies was brought into the country from Thailand.

"If this is the case, where was the control point? Why do so many

dogs and cats have to pay a price for man's negligence and lackadaisical attitude?"

Knine Professional dog services director Dave Teoh said giving anti-rabies shots was the best way to protect pets.

"A few other measures can be taken to protect your dog and others. The easiest is to leash the dog while walking outside and keep a safe distance between your dog and other dogs.

"Avoid getting angry or shouting at a dog unnecessarily. And, only walk a dog when you are confident that you can handle it."



Dog lovers doing **volunteer work** in an animal shelter.



## What is rabies?

A deadly virus that attacks the central nervous system and causes acute inflammation of the brain, resulting either from a viral infection or when the body's own immune system mistakenly attacks brain tissue.

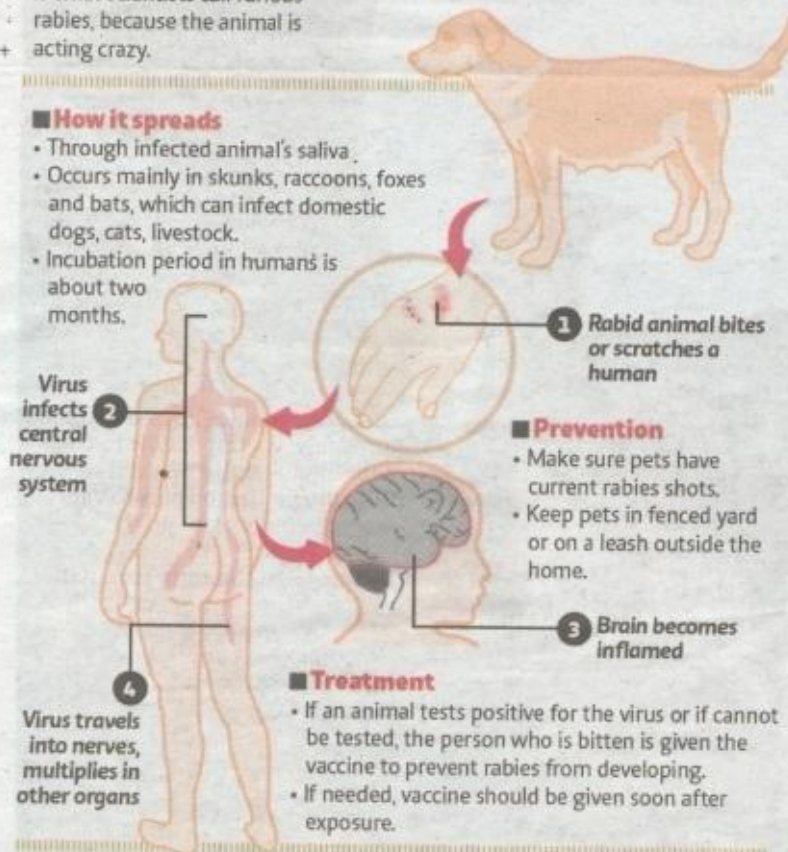
Two types of rabies can develop: furious rabies or dumb rabies.

■ **Furious rabies:** Usually, the virus makes carnivores, like dogs, act mean. Sometimes a dog with rabies will bite everything in its path. This is what scientists call furious rabies, because the animal is acting crazy.

■ **Dumb rabies:** Herbivores may just get sick. Lies on the ground and die. Dogs can get dumb rabies too. A dog or wild animal with dumb rabies may seem friendly or tame, when it normally wouldn't be.

### How it spreads

- Through infected animal's saliva.
- Occurs mainly in skunks, raccoons, foxes and bats, which can infect domestic dogs, cats, livestock.
- Incubation period in humans is about two months.



### Prevention

- Make sure pets have current rabies shots.
- Keep pets in fenced yard or on a leash outside the home.

### Treatment

- If an animal tests positive for the virus or if cannot be tested, the person who is bitten is given the vaccine to prevent rabies from developing.
- If needed, vaccine should be given soon after exposure.

### Rabies symptoms in humans

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| • Progressive anxiety and agitation              | to light  | a spasm.  |
| • Stiff neck                                     | • Thermophobia — abnormal sensitivity to temperatures   | • Partial paralysis   |
| • Seizures                                       | • Hydrophobia — drinking water becomes increasingly difficult. When the patient tries to drink the throat muscles and the diaphragm go into | • Delusions   |
| • Overproduction of tears and saliva (end stage) |   | • Hallucinations  |
| • Convulsions                                    |   | • Insomnia  |
| • Dilated pupils                                 |   | • Alternating periods of mental clarity with severe anxiety, followed by confusion, delusions and hallucinations. |
| • Photophobia — abnormal sensitivity             |   |   |

**Virtually all patients die within two to 10 days after the first symptoms appear.**

Source: <http://www.rabiesfree.org>, US Centers for Disease Control & Prevention