Launch of A New Era In Rabies Eradication

Project Mission Rabies
A Historic Achievement for a Rabies Free India

With over 200 million street dogs and expanding urban habitations, if there is one major initiative that has truly brought awareness about rabies to the country, it is the spectacular success of Project Mission Rabies. Project Mission Rabies shows the enormous potential for excellence in execution and mobilization of resources that is possible with commitment, hard work and proper planning. At the Animal Welfare Board of India, we have offered all possible support to Luke Gamble, Veterinarian and Founder, Worldwide Veterinary Services to help him achieve this goal. Dr. Chinny Krishna, Vice-President, AWBI and President, Project Mission Rabies has been the backbone of this Project by mobilizing the active participation of a network of Animal Welfare Organizations across the country. It is the support given by the Federation of Indian Animal Protection Organizations as well as PFA through a network of volunteers working at the grass-roots that has made it possible for this incredible initiative to take off the ground and deliver outstanding results in record time.

To vaccinate over 60,000 dogs in just 30 days in 10 rabies hotspots, with limited resources and a handful of volunteers stationed all over the country is an incredible feat. Though Project Mission Rabies had just close to 500 volunteers from 43 organizations and 16 countries, Luke Gamble richly deserves the honour of being felicitated with the Jeanne Marchig Award 2013 for his exceptional efforts. Luke is a truly remarkable veterinarian, with an iron-will and passionately driven to run that extra mile for the beloved street dogs of India. His contribution to protect both human welfare and the welfare of the street dogs of India by embarking on this mammoth anti-rabies vaccination drive is an extraordinary achievement.

Roaring along at an incredible speed of 2000 dogs a day or 166 dogs per hour in a gruelling twelve hour day, the Mission Rabies Truck swept through rabies hotspots in Coimbatore, Erode, Madurai, Chennai, Nagpur, Trivandrum, Goa, Tirupati, Bhubaneshwar, Bikaner, Calcutta, Ranchi, and Guwahati. With this detour all over India and achieving a record 70% vaccinations in the ten selected rabies hotspots, Project Mission Rabies has taken a major step forward in its plans to make India a rabies free nation. This initiative has been modeled along the lines of what was followed by Argentine medical doctor, Oscar Larchi who has successfully eradicated rabies from some of Latin America’s largest and worst affected cities.

As the Mission Rabies chugs along through towns and cities all over India vaccinating dogs and teaching vets and para-vets how to carry out ABC programmes adhering to high standards of quality and care, I can see that the day will not be far, when India will become a rabies free nation. Pledging to vaccinate two million dogs and teaching vets and paravets how to carry out ABC programmes in every major rabies hotspot in the country in the next three years, Project Mission Rabies has been generously funded with a large number of sponsors that include Merck Sharp and Dohme suppliers of the anti-rabies vaccines. The Dogs Trust and Jeanne Marchig Trust have played a key role in propelling the idea into reality. Nigel Otter, Director, IPAN and Ilona Otter, Clinical Director, Worldwide Veterinary Services Ltd to make India a rabies free country. This year, the first phase of the Project which was launched in September was completed on World Rabies Day, September 28th, 2013, with 60,310 dogs vaccinated against rabies within just 30 days. With a team of 500 volunteers and leading Animal Welfare Organizations supporting the initiative, the first phase of Project Mission Rabies has achieved outstanding success.

What can animal welfare activists learn from the success of Project Mission Rabies? That if you have a big dream, keep the faith and chase it with commitment, integrity and hard work, sooner or later, you will experience resounding success. If Project Mission Rabies succeeds in having a network of well functioning anti-rabies vaccination and ABC Centres in every major rabies hotspot in the country in the next three years, and with a significant drop in dog bites and deaths in humans due to rabies, it will be the biggest milestone for eradication of rabies in the world. My best wishes to the continuing success of the Mission Rabies Team.

Warmly,

Maj. Gen. (Retd) Dr. R.M. Kharb, AVSM
On The Trail ...
Vaccinating Dogs in India's Rabies Hotspots

August 31st, Goa

September 6th, Erode

September 8th, Goa

September 12th, Madurai

September 16th, Chennai

September 23rd, Bhubhaneswar

September 25th, Kolkata

September 28th, Guwahati

September 18th, Bikaner

The table on the left gives the number of dogs vaccinated in each city leading to a total of 60,310 dogs vaccinated in 30 days.

A Few of The Stars Leading Mission Rabies... 

Kate graduated as a vet from the University of Bristol in 2004 with a keen interest in animal welfare and would travel. She soon discovered Worldwide Veterinary Service and began volunteering on overseas animal welfare projects across Europe, Africa, South America and Asia. Kate joined the WVS team for a year in 2009, before taking on the role of International Director of Mission Rabies in 2012.

Ursula qualified from the University of Veterinary Medicine, Hannover in 1996. She completed her specialist training to be able to offer thermal imaging services but remains committed to providing the highest standards of veterinary care as a night nurse in both inpatient and referral practice. Outside of work, she loves travelling and in recent years has combined her veterinary work with volunteer work on veterinary welfare projects.

Dr. Jeff Young set up Planned Pethood Plus in 1990 to offer low-cost mobile ABC services and training for vets worldwide. To date, he has sterilized over 100,000 animals. Dr. Young is the Mission Rabies Trainer for North India.

Anastasia is a Veterinary Epidemiologist passionate about disease investigation. She has offered to help with analyzing the epidemiological data from Mission Rabies. She works full time as a Veterinary Officer teaching Rabies. She works full time as a Veterinary Officer teaching Rabies. She works full time as a Veterinary Officer teaching Rabies.

Hana is Mission Rabies’ South India Veterinary Director. She studied in the University of Helsinki, Finland, and started her career in mixed veterinary practice in 2003. She came to India in 2004 and has since been involved with India Project for Animals and Nature (IPAN) in Tamil Nadu as a veterinary consultant. In 2009, Hana and her husband, Nigel O’Toole, began work with Worldwide Veterinary Service to establish the International Training Centre which has so far trained over 300 veterinarians from around India in spay/neuter surgery.

Nigel is Mission Rabies India Operations Director and Chairman of WVS India, as well as the managing trustee of India Project for Animals and Nature (IPAN). He has received the Jaigopal Gandadhi Animal Activist Award in 2003, Civil Society Citizen Karmaveer Puraskar in 2008 and Kalupathy Muniadi Award in 2013 for his dedication to animal welfare and nature conservation. Nigel is appointed as an Hon. Animal Welfare Officer by Mission Rabies India and has been a member of the Governing Body of the Federation of Animal Protection Organisations (FIAP).

Anita is a Registered Veterinary Nurse who has served the profession for twenty years. She has experience in practice management and recently completed training to be able to offer thermal imaging services but remains committed to providing the highest standards of veterinary care as a night nurse in both inpatient and referral practice. Outside of work, she loves travelling and in recent years has combined her veterinary work with volunteer work on veterinary welfare projects.

Dr. Shashikant S Jadhav did his post-graduation in 2006 from Nagpur Veterinary College. In 2008, Dr. Jadhav founded Vets for Animals (VFA), which has neutered and vaccinated over 30,410 dogs and prevented 12,783 anti-rabies vaccines.

Chris is employed by Worldwide Veterinary Service as Logistic Support Officer. Chris was involved in covering the day to day liaison between the different groups involved with Mission Rabies, as well as assisting in the shipping of the Mission Rabies vehicles and the general logistics involved in the project.

Andry qualified from the Royal Veterinary College in 2010. He has been involved in charity work in U.K, Malawi, Thailand & Hong Kong. Andy joined Mission Rabies after volunteering in the September vaccination campaign in Madurai & Kolak:ra. His previous field experience with the data collection tool, Epicollect, came in useful while volunteering and he has been working on a bespoke data collection smartphone app for the project.

Mike completed his veterinary studies in the UK in 2008. Always interested in human/animal interactions throughout the world, he headed to India in the summer of 2013 to volunteer with WVS-ITC, and worked with Mission Rabies. Mike is now directing the newly formed US branch of Mission Rabies.
The Animal Welfare Board of India is an umbrella of the SPCAs/AWOs and Animal Welfare Workers. The Board encourages Animal Welfare activities, advises the Central and State Governments on issues relating to Animal Welfare, particularly the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and also helps to formulate Animal Welfare Policies / Legislations.