



**EVALUATION OF RABIES AWARENESS AND THE POPULATION
DYNAMICS OF FREE-ROAMING AND OWNED DOGS IN HERAT CITY,
AFGHANISTAN**

By

ZABIHULLAH NASIRY

**Thesis Submitted to School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in
Fulfilment of the Requirements for Master of Veterinary Science**

July 2022

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the Master of Veterinary Science

EVALUATION OF RABIES AWARENESS AND THE POPULATION DYNAMICS OF FREE-ROAMING AND OWNED DOGS IN HERAT CITY, AFGHANISTAN

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July 2022

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The existent uncontrolled dog population in Herat city has a negatively influenced public health leading to socioeconomic, and animal welfare problems. The objectives of the study were to characterize demographics and estimate the population size of both owned and free-roaming dogs, to assess dog bites cases, and knowledge, attitude, and practices of the community towards rabies and to estimate the post-exposure treatment costs associated with dog bites in Herat city, Afghanistan. These aims were achieved by a Door to door household questionnaire survey, Random-digit dial telephone questionnaire survey and Photographic sight-re-sight method. A total of 928 Free-roaming dogs (FRD) were identified through 3172 sightings, and total of free-roaming population were estimated 1821 (95% Confidence Interval (CI): 1565-2077), which led to an estimate of 10 dogs/km² with the human: free-roaming dog ratio of 315:1. The male to female ratio was 2.85:1. Majority of them were healthy and had ideal body condition score. Approximately 24.6% of the households owned one or more dogs. The total owned dogs were estimated to be 20,642 (95% CI= 22,764 – 18,630) dogs with density of 113 dogs/km². The owned dog: human ratio was 1: 27.79 (0.035 dog per person). The male to female ratio of owned dog was 5.1:1. Almost 76.7% of households kept dogs confined and only 19% of dogs were vaccinated against rabies. Approximately 4,845 dog bite cases had been referred to health centres of Herat city from December 22, 2019 to March 20, 2021, and seven fatality cases due to rabies have been recorded. Out of 581 dog bite victims interviewed, majority of them (90.8%) were bitten by free-roaming dogs. This study revealed that the extremities were the most (90.3%) inflicted parts. Most dog bite victims were predominantly male and children. More than half (58%) of bite victims took measures to treat the bite wound before seeking health centre and 88.8% of them were visited health centres immediately. Majority of dog bite victims (92.3%) received rabies Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) and 67% completed the PEP course. Besides that, the majority of the respondents (83.5%) had previously heard about rabies, 77.5% believed that rabies is a dangerous and lethal disease and more than half (61.6%) of also believed that rabies is a preventable disease. There was high level (97.3%) of awareness that dog bite is the main cause of rabies. The total direct medical and indirect costs due

to dog bites were estimated to be 9.658992 million Afghani (120,737 USD) and 2.88 million Afghani (36044 USD) per year respectively. The total societal costs (direct medical costs plus indirect costs) were estimated to be 12.538992 million Afghani (156,781 USD) per year. Although the dog density is considered low, the dog bites rate and economic costs are considerable, so it still warrants caution since a proportion of the population is not well-versed about dogs and their importance of them in the transmission of zoonotic diseases like rabies. The information generated by this research can help to identify considerations for the design and implementation of dogs and rabies control programs.

Keywords: dog population dynamics, demography, dog bites, rabies, Herat city.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat of Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains Veterinar

PENILAIAN KESEDARAN RABIES DAN DINAMIK POPULASI ANJING BERKELIARAN BEBAS DAN ANJIN PELIHARAAN DI BANDAR HERAT, AFGHANISTAN

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Kewujudan populasi anjing yang tidak terkawal di bandar Herat memberi kesan negatif kepada kesihatan awam dan membawa kepada masalah sosioekonomi, politik, dan kebajikan haiwan. Objektif kajian ini adalah untuk mencirikan demografi dan membuat anggaran saiz populasi anjing bertuan dan anjing yang bebas berkeliaran, untuk menaksir kes gigitan anjing dan pengetahuan, sikap dan amalan komuniti terhadap rabies serta untuk mendapatkan anggaran kos rawatan pasca-pendedahan akibat gigitan anjing di bandar Herat, Afghanistan. Matlamat ini dicapai melalui tinjauan soal selidik dari pintu ke pintu, soal selidik dail digit telefon secara rawak dan kaedah pandang-semula fotografi di bandar Herat, Afghanistan. Sebanyak 928 ekor anjing yang bebas berkeliaran (FRD) telah dikenalpasti melalui 3172 tinjauan, dan sebanyak 1821 (95% interval keyakinan (CI): 1565-2077) populasi yang berkeliaran-bebas telah dianggarkan yang membawa kepada nisbah anggaran 10 anjing/km² dengan nisbah manusia:anjing yang berkeliaran-bebas iaitu 315:1. Nisbah anjing jantan kepada betina adalah sebanyak 2.85:1. Majoriti anjing tersebut didapati sihat dan mempunyai skor keadaan badan yang unggul. Kira-kira 24.6% daripada isi rumah memiliki satu atau lebih anjing. Jumlah anjing yang bertuan dianggarkan sebanyak 20,642 (95% CI= 22,764 – 18,630) ekor anjing dengan kepadatan 113 anjing/km². Nisbah anjing yang bertuan kepada manusia adalah 1:27.79 (0.035 anjing setiap satu orang). Nisbah anjing yang bertuan dalam kalangan anjing jantan kepada betina adalah 5.1:1. Hampir 76.7% isi rumah memelihara anjing dalam kurungan dan hanya 19% anjing telah diberi vaksin rabies. Kira-kira 4,845 kes gigitan anjing telah dirujuk ke pusat kesihatan bandar Herat daripada Disember 22, 2019 hingga Mac 20, 2021, dan tujuh kes merekodkan kematian disebabkan rabies. Daripada 581 mangsa gigitan anjing yang telah diwawancara, majoriti daripada mereka (90.8%) telah digigit oleh anjing-anjing yang berkeliaran-bebas. Kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa bahagian hujung kaki dan tangan (90.3%) adalah bahagian yang sering digigit. Majoriti mangsa gigitan anjing terdiri daripada lelaki dan kanak-kanak. Lebih daripada separuh (58%) mangsa gigitan anjing telah mengambil langkah-langkah yang sepatutnya untuk merawat luka gigitan sebelum mendapatkan rawatan di pusat kesihatan dan 88.8% daripada mereka telah hadir ke pusat kesihatan dengan segera. Majoriti mangsa gigitan

anjing (92.3%) telah menerima profilaksis pasca-pendedahan rabies (PEP) dan 67% daripada mereka telah melengkapkan siri rawatan PEP. Selain itu, majoriti responden (83.5%) pernah mendengar mengenai rabies, 77.5% percaya bahawa rabies adalah penyakit berbahaya serta membawa maut dan lebih daripada separuh (61.6%) juga percaya bahawa rabies adalah penyakit yang boleh dicegah. Terdapat tahap kesedaran yang tinggi (97.3%) bahawa gigitan anjing merupakan faktor utama rabies. Jumlah kos perubatan langsung dan tidak langsung akibat gigitan anjing dianggarkan masing-masing sebanyak 9.658992 million Afghani (120,737 USD) dan 2.88 million Afghani (36044 USD) setahun. Jumlah kos kemasyarakatan (kos perubatan langsung dengan kos tak langsung) pula dianggarkan sebanyak 12.538992 million Afghani (156,781 USD) setahun. Walaupun kepadatan anjing didapati rendah, kadar gigitan anjing dan kos ekonomi adalah agak besar, maka langkah berjaga-jaga perlu dilaksanakan memandangkan sebahagian daripada populasi tidak begitu memahami perihal anjing dan kepentingan anjing dalam penularan penyakit zoonotik seperti rabies.

Kata kunci: dinamik populasi anjing, demografi, gigitan anjing, rabies, bandar Herat

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CI	Confidence Interval
CNS	Central Nervous System
DALYs	Disability-adjusted life years
DBV/s	Dog Bite Victim/s
DFA	Direct fluorescent Antibody
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic Acid
DPM	Dog Population Management
ERIG	Equine Rabies Immunoglobulin
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FRD	Free-roaming dog/s
GIS	Geographic Information System
GPS	Global positioning System
HRIG	Human Rabies Immunoglobulin
HU	Herat University
ICAM	International Companion Animal Management Coalition
Km ²	Kilometre Square
MIT	Mouse Inoculation Test
OIE	World Organization for Animal Health
PCR	Polymerase Chain Reaction
PEP	Post-Exposure Prophylaxis
PET	post-exposure treatment
PSR	Photographic Sight re-sight
RIG	Rabies Immunoglobulin

RNA	Ribonucleic Acid
TT	tetanus toxoids
USD	United States Dollar
WHO	World Health Organization
WSPA	World Society for Protection of Animal



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The long known ubiquitously distributed and phenotypically diversified domestic dog (*Canine Lupus familiaris*) is one of our closest companions in the animal kingdom (Acosta-Jamett et al., 2010; Galibert et al., 2011; Larson et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2015). Following this historical relationship, humans have transformed domesticated dogs as pets, companions, security dogs, draught animals or for other economic advantages (Stafford, 2006).

Owing to their behavioural, and cognitive abilities, dogs serve a wide range of roles in society, including tracking down criminals, search and rescue work, herding, companionship, sporting activities and illegal goods trafficking (Stafford, 2006; Wang et al., 2015). Despite being considered unclean by Afghans; many people still keep dogs for some of the roles mentioned above.

Nevertheless, with an estimate of almost 500 million being strays globally (Hughes & Macdonald, 2013; Kisiel et al., 2016; Wallace et al., 2017; Smith et al., 2019). their potential health risks associated with aggression and bites, allergies and zoonotic diseases should never be underestimated (Westgarth et al., 2013; Sparkes et al., 2014; Hambolu et al., 2014; Hiby & Hiby, 2017).

The management of stray dogs are mostly difficult (often involves capture, treatment, neutering and release), and still considered a significant problem in developing and developed countries (Sparkes et al., 2014), considering the potential threat of being reservoirs and vectors of diseases of more than 100 zoonoses (Chomel, 2014; Özen et al., 2016; Kisiel et al., 2016). More than 100 zoonotic diseases are recognized to be transmitted from dogs and cats to humans). Likewise, other negative effects include environmental contamination, traffic accident, cynophobia, noise pollution, and spreading garbage (Tiwari et al., 2019).

Apart from rabies, 29 million cases of dog bites were reported annually in humans (Ma et al., 2020), leading to serious medical consequences such as trauma (Cleaveland et al., 2006; Hambolu et al., 2014) and wound infection (Hossain et al., 2013; Ghaffari-Fam et al., 2016). Approximately 96.5% of the financial losses amounting to 1.7 billion USD (Ma et al., 2020) inflicted by rabies treatment occurred in low and middle-income countries (Ghaffari-Fam et al., 2016; Ma et al., 2020). In the absence of a known dog population, accurate data and an effective rabies control program, dog bites are a serious public health problem in Afghanistan (Wallace et al., 2002). However, it is estimated that daily around 3-10 dog bite cases are referred to health centers of each province of Afghanistan. In Herat province, a total of 4845 dog bites cases were referred to health

centers from December 22, 2019 to March 20, 2021 and majority of the victims were unable to receive proper treatment due to poverty (CDC department of Herat province, 2021).

This ancient deadly disease has risked more than 3.3 billion people globally (Gill et al., 2019) with the world poorest regions being at high risk (Hampson et al., 2015). Domestic dogs especially those free-roaming are responsible for 99% of human cases and deaths with an estimated yearly statistics of 59,000 people globally (Sambo et al., 2018; Gill et al., 2019; Cleaton et al., 2019). Almost all mammalian species are susceptible to rabies where it has encroached living-stock yielding an estimated loss of 12.3 billion USD in Africa and Asia (Gill et al., 2019). At the same time, the annual number of anti-rabies treatments in humans is estimated to be around 6.5 million worldwide resulting a significant healthcare costs (Bouaddi et al., 2018).

Dog-mediated rabies is responsible for around 35,172 human deaths (59.6% of rabies global deaths) each year in Asia and most (71%) of these deaths occurred in south Asia countries (Ward, 2012).

Harbouring 34 endemic rabies province with hundreds of death annually (Wallace et al., 2002; Tenzin and M. P. Ward, 2012), signifies beyond doubt that Afghanistan is one of the many developing Asian countries still struggling with rabies. The likely root problems of the ongoing rabies endemicity in Afghanistan is attributed to inaccurate epidemiological information and absence of specific rabies prevention and control measures (Tenzin and M. P. Ward, 2012).

As the previously explained, the negative effects of free-roaming dogs can be off-set if population size, demographic structures and dynamics of dogs are known to allow an effective management and control of rabies (Cleaton et al., 2019; Ntampaka et al., 2019) in addition to vaccination (Amaku et al., 2010; Otolorin *et al.*, 2014; Özen et al., 2016; Wongphruksasoong et al., 2016, Ntampaka et al., 2019). Because an understanding of dog ecology has been recognised as a key factor in designing and implement of an effective rabies control program in rabies endemic countries where dogs are the main transmitter of rabies (Pimburage et al., 2017). Sadly, the size of dog population in the most rabies-endemic area is generally unknown (Sambo et al., 2018).

Nowadays a wide variety of effective methods of enumeration are applicable, from simple counts and surveys to sophisticated models (Cleaton et al., 2019; Meunier et al., 2019). But notwithstanding all the current methodological advances, the WHO and World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) suggested just four methods to be used in the estimation of the abundance of free-roaming dogs including total or indirect counts, regression method, estimates of capture-recapture method and Beck (photographic capture) method. However, methods for estimating and evaluating free-roaming dogs are described in the WHO and World Society for Protection of Animal (WSPA) Guidelines for Dog Population Management (1990), the WSPA guidelines for surveying roaming dog population (2009), the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code (2010) and FAO Report on Dog Population Management (2014).

1.2 Problem Statement

The lack of epidemiological data on the canine population and dog-bite-related rabies coupled with ineffective control measures, canine rabies remains to be endemic in Herat province. Thus, in view of the lack of data and realizing importance of dog population demography and dynamics in prevention and control of rabies, forms the basis of the current study with the following objectives:

- to evaluate demographic structure and estimate the population size of Free-roaming dogs in Herat city, Afghanistan
- to evaluate demographic structure and estimate the population size of owned dogs in Herat city, Afghanistan
- to evaluate the knowledge, attitudes and practices of community towards rabies in Herat city, Afghanistan
- to assess dog bite cases and estimate the post-exposure treatment cost associated with dog bites in Herat city, Afghanistan.

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