



Understanding Street Dog Life

Rethinking approaches to rabies
management across India

TD Research



Dog-mediated rabies is a major concern in many parts of Asia and Africa. This vaccine-preventable disease occurs in over 150 countries and is nearly always fatal once symptoms appear. Dogs are responsible for up to 99% of all transmissions to humans, with India accounting for 35% of the global rabies burden despite a long history of rabies prevention efforts.

With the continued persistence of rabies as a public health problem in the Global South, how might we shift thinking, change perceptions and evolve our approach to managing rabies via remaking 'One Health'?

Project Overview

One Health is an integrated, unifying approach that aims to balance and optimise the health of people, animals, and ecosystems. It recognises that the health of humans, plants, domestic and wild animals, and the wider environment are closely interconnected. In 2001, India shifted from dog culling programs to a One Health approach that promoted neutering and vaccinations. Despite these efforts, eradication and effective management of rabies remains problematic, continues to cause casualties, and drives tensions between people and dogs. This project investigates why rabies persists as a public health problem in both urban and rural areas of India and is looking to remake One Health to consider rabies transmission as more than just disease management. It builds on pilot research, that suggests that the answer may lie in insufficient attention to the complexity of everyday people-dog relations.

Our Impact

Our transdisciplinary research team is collaborating with a range of experts to rethink the dominant concepts and practices that support safe cohabitation between people and animals. Our solution seeks to evolve One Health by making it more socially and culturally informed. Drawing on our expertise in animal behaviour and ecology within UTS's Centre for Compassionate Conservation, our research focuses on understanding the lived experience of dogs on the street and how that shapes rabies transmission. Grounded in human geography, social psychology, and history, we are highlighting the importance of transdisciplinary research methodologies for addressing complex global challenges. More than just pets, our research has been identifying the socio-cultural conditions that lead to healthy lives for dogs on the streets. Additionally, we have been documenting conditions that lead to poor outcomes and tensions between people and dogs. With our project partners, we have been developing education resources aimed at ensuring safety for all and implementing effective interventions that improve the coexistence of street dogs and humans. By creating new systems for sustainable rabies management and prevention and highlighting the importance of fostering positive dog-human relationships, this research aims to develop policy guidelines and evolve practices in India and other regions-surpassing and positively impacting traditional One Health approaches.

Work with us

We deliver a wide range of research projects for public and private sector partners seeking research expertise and support in overcoming their complex challenges using our unique transdisciplinary (TD) methodology. To find out how TD Research can help you and your organisation, please email -

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INDUSTRY PARTNER

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PROJECT PARTNERS

UTS Centre for Compassionate Conservation, UTS Transdisciplinary School, The University of Edinburgh (UOE), The University of Liverpool (UOL) and the University of Western Australia (UWA).

COLLABORATING PARTNERS

Socratus, DogsTrust, Ashvini Menon, The Association for Prevention and Control of Rabies in India (APCRI), Humane World for Animals India, Help in Suffering, Working for Animals.

RESEARCH TEAM

Daniel Ramp, Rosalie Chapple, Nynke Kooistra, Prativa Bomzon, Kapil Patwardhan, and Rashmi Singh Rana (UTS), Krithika Srinivasan, Guillem Rubio Ramon, Priyanshu Thapilyal (UOE), Chris Pearson, Heeral Chhabra (UOL), Tim Kurz and Jo Watson (UWA).



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