

Special Issue

**RABIES IN
SOUTHERN AND EASTERN
AFRICA**

Proceedings of a workshop held at the
Faculty of Veterinary Science, University of Pretoria
Onderstepoort, South Africa

3–5 May 1993

Editors

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The Southern and Eastern African Rabies Group (SEARG)

SEARG was founded at the International Conference on Epidemiology, Control and Prevention of Rabies in Eastern and Southern Africa held in Lusaka in June 1992, (Proceedings edited by Dr A.A. King and published by Éditions Foundation Marcel Mérieux, 17 rue Bourgelat, 69002, Lyon, France). It is an unusual organization in that it has no official constitution or membership list and is merely an affiliation of scientists, veterinarians and other concerned individuals interested in promoting the control of rabies in southern and eastern Africa. It does, however, have two honorary officials: a chairperson and secretary/treasurer. The founder chairman and secretary/treasurer were Dr Peter Sinyangwe (Zambia) and Mr George Bishop (South Africa) respectively.

At a meeting held in Pietermaritzburg (South Africa) on 29 April 1993 the following decisions/resolutions were made:

- The organization was renamed from the original “Southern African Rabies Group” to include East African representatives and aspirations
- Dr Paula Dias (Mozambique) and Mr George Bishop (South Africa) were elected chairperson and secretary/treasurer respectively until the next meeting planned for Mozambique towards the end of 1994
- SEARG, in the person of the secretary/treasurer, will produce a 6-monthly newsletter reporting rabies “events” and epidemiological data for the region
- It was proposed that Dr Arthur King (Weybridge, UK) act as a “roving technical expert” for SEARG as time and finance allows.
- Three areas of special endeavour/research were identified as being vital to progress in rabies control in the region:
 - (a) control of canine rabies;
 - (b) epidemiological surveillance;
 - (c) sociological reasons for resistance on the part of many people to having their dogs immunized against rabies in the region.

These topics will be addressed at the next meeting of SEARG.

Preface

The papers published in these proceedings were read at a rabies workshop held at Onderstepoort, South Africa on 3–5 May 1993 under the auspices of the Southern and Eastern African Rabies Group (SEARG). The major objectives of the workshop were, firstly, to provide an interface between people engaged in rabies research in southern and eastern Africa and their counterparts in Europe and North America and, secondly, to review developments in rabies research which are of particular relevance in controlling the increasingly serious rabies problem in many regions in Africa. Implicit in these objectives is the desire of SEARG to enable African countries to become more self-reliant in addressing local rabies problems.

A different theme was selected by SEARG for each of the three days, viz.:

- The molecular epidemiology of African Lyssaviruses
- Rabies in wildlife
- Development of bait vaccines for the control of canine rabies

The chairmen for these three sessions were Prof. H. Huismans (Department of Genetics, University of Pretoria), Dr R.D. Bigalke (Deputy Director General, Department of Agriculture, S.A.) and Prof. K. Dumbell (University of Cape Town Medical School). They are thanked for ably keeping order and stimulating interesting discussion.

The workshop was preceded by two other activities, also arranged and largely funded by SEARG, viz. a laboratory training session for African laboratory diagnosticians working on rabies and a rabies symposium aimed primarily at people involved in the control of rabies in the field. These two gatherings were held in Pietermaritzburg and a diagnostic manual and proceedings emanating from there are, or soon will be, available.

A multinational gathering such as this (approximately 90 researchers attended) is obviously expensive (more than 30 delegates were fully or partially funded) and the cost to SEARG of this and the two meetings held in Pietermaritzburg was approximately \$65 000. This money was raised from a number of donors both within South Africa and in Europe and SEARG is sincerely appreciative of these contributions which made the workshop possible. The principal donors are listed below:

- Rhône Poulenc Ltd, South Africa
- Foundation for Research Development, South Africa
- Department of Agriculture, South Africa
- Virbac SA, France
- Onderstepoort Veterinary Institute (Agricultural Research Council), South Africa
- Poliomyelitis Research Foundation, South Africa
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- SARCCUS (Southern African Regional Commission)
- O.I.E. (Office International des Epizooties)
- Rhône Merieux, France
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Dr D.W. Verwoerd, Director of the Onderstepoort Veterinary Institute, is thanked for actively supporting the workshop and for publishing the proceedings in the *Onderstepoort Journal of Veterinary Research*.

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