



Republic of Ghana

RABIES PREVENTION GUIDE FOR BASIC SCHOOLS



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INTRODUCTION

Rabies is a vaccine preventable, viral disease of warm-blooded animals most often transmitted through the bite or scratch of an infected animal. It is one of the priority zoonotic diseases identified in Ghana by the national One Health in 2020 that requires concentrated efforts for prevention and control. Dogs are the most important reservoir species for rabies and are known to cause 99% of all reported human cases. (CDC: Rabies around the world).

In Ghana, one of the biggest challenges in rabies control and prevention is the ineffective management of the dog population and subsequently the inability to effectively protect people from dog bites. In the light of these circumstances, children have become the most vulnerable to dog bites associated with rabies infection. According to research and records from the Veterinary Services Directorate and Ghana Health Services more than twenty percent of people bitten or scratched by animals in Ghana were children under 15 years of age (MOFA, VSD, 2018).

Ghana has a vibrant School Health Education Program (SHEP) through which basic information on common and preventable ailments associated with children are communicated with them to promote prevention. Including rabies prevention information dissemination in the health and safety component of SHEP activities, will be an important step in curbing the rate at which children suffer from dog bites and probably rabies. Teachers, especially school based-health teachers therefore have an important role to play in ensuring children learn the right actions to take in avoiding dog bites and rabies infection.



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The Rabies Prevention Guide for Basic Schools is designed to serve as a handy technical guide providing teachers with the right information about the disease, rabies, how it is spread, and how to prevent and manage dog bites through which rabies infection takes place. With this guide, teachers in kindergarten, primary and junior high schools are provided with the right tool to become part of Ghana's efforts to achieve total prevention of rabies by 2030.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has targeted 2030 as the year by which rabies should be eliminated from all countries of the world. Globally, 28th September of every year is commemorated as World Rabies Day. It is a day set aside to raise awareness about prevention and elimination both human and animal rabies and to engage communities for effective rabies prevention.

Marking World Rabies Day with well organized activities is one of the ways by which individuals and communities can contribute towards achieving the WHO target. The school as a community has an important role to play in this exercise.

School children have been noted as important agents of change and have often been very effective in sharing information on new ideas among community members. They will therefore play a vital role in sharing rabies prevention and management messages among themselves, their immediate family and community members.

Key activities that could be organized in schools to create awareness on rabies prevention include:

- Quiz and debate during which school children have the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge about rabies.

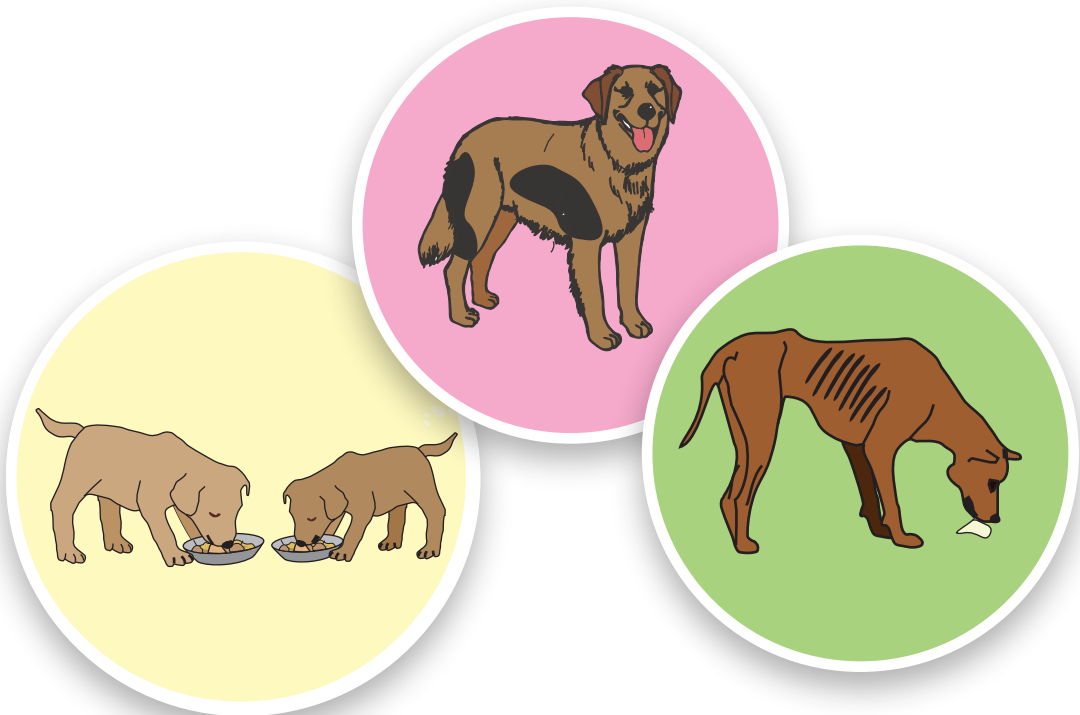


- Role plays through which messages on rabies prevention and management would effectively be demonstrated to the children and community members.
- Health talk sessions during which human and animal health specialists provide expert information and messages to school children, teachers and community members.
- Key rabies prevention messages could also be included in lyrics of marching or dance songs, poems.
- School Health clubs could integrate rabies messages in their routine activities.

This Rabies Prevention Guide for Basic Schools was developed by the USAID Breakthrough ACTION Project in collaboration with GES/SHEP, the Veterinary Services Directorate, the Health Promotion Division of the Ghana Health Service, Wildlife Division of the Forestry Commission, World Health Organization and Food and Agriculture Organization.

WHAT IS RABIES?

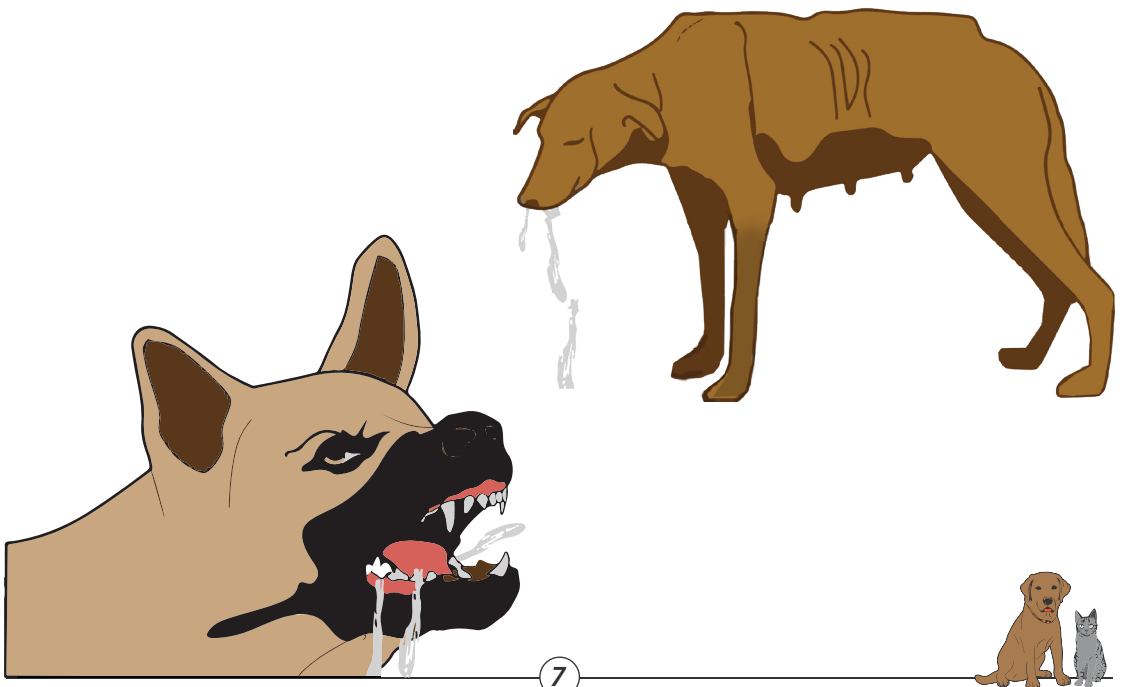
Rabies is a serious disease that causes severe illness and death among people and animals. It is a fatal disease largely transmitted to humans through the bite or scratch of infected animals such as dogs and cats. In Ghana, almost everyone infected with rabies gets it from the bite or scratch of an infected dog. Children are the most affected since they play often with the dogs and are unable to report any dog bite or scratches to their parents or guardians.



HOW IS RABIES SPREAD?

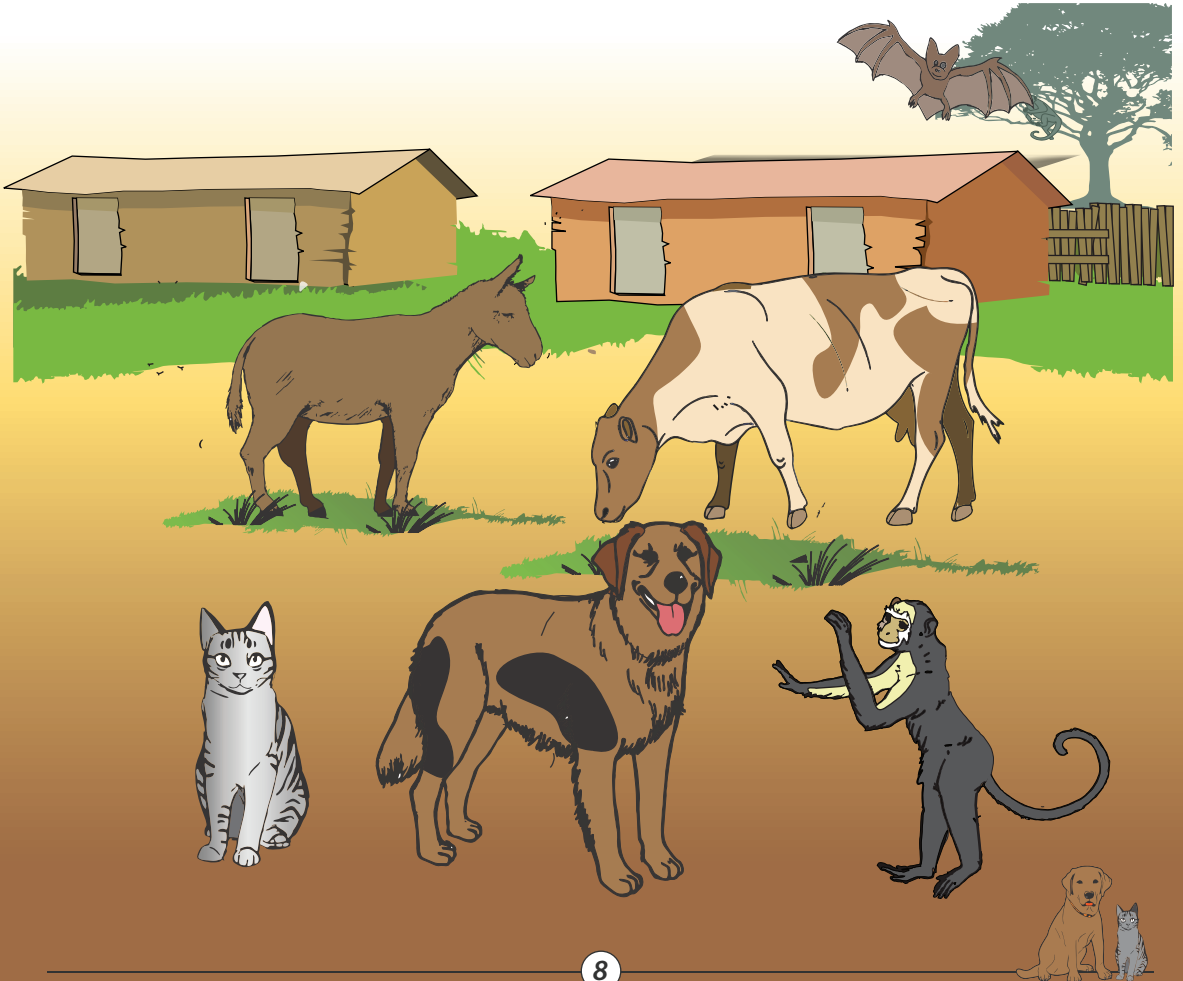
Rabies is spread from the saliva of infected warm-blooded animals such as dogs and cats, through bites or scratches.

The rabies virus enters a break in the skin (like a wound or a cut) and infects the central nervous system of the animal or person, ultimately causing rabies disease in the brain which can lead to death.



Rabies can also enter a person's body through the mouth, eyes, or nose when an animal with rabies licks a person's face or skin.

Any animal that has hair can get and spread rabies, including dogs, cats, monkeys, donkeys, cows, and bats.



Almost everyone who gets rabies gets it from the **BITE OR SCRATCH OF A DOG THAT HAS RABIES.**

There is no evidence to show that rabies spreads from person to person

Dogs with rabies can act in different ways.

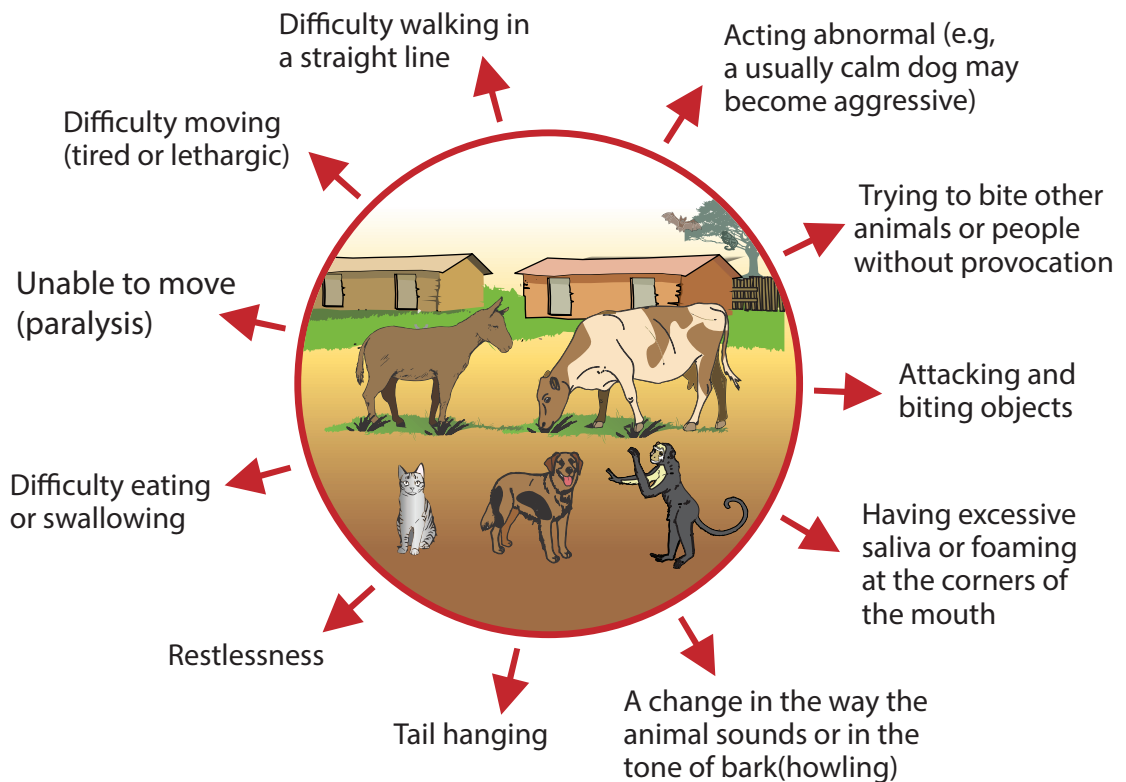
It can be difficult to tell if a dog has rabies without the help of a Veterinary Officer.

That is why it is very important to avoid dogs that are acting strangely



WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF RABIES IN ANIMALS

The signs and symptoms of rabies in animals include:

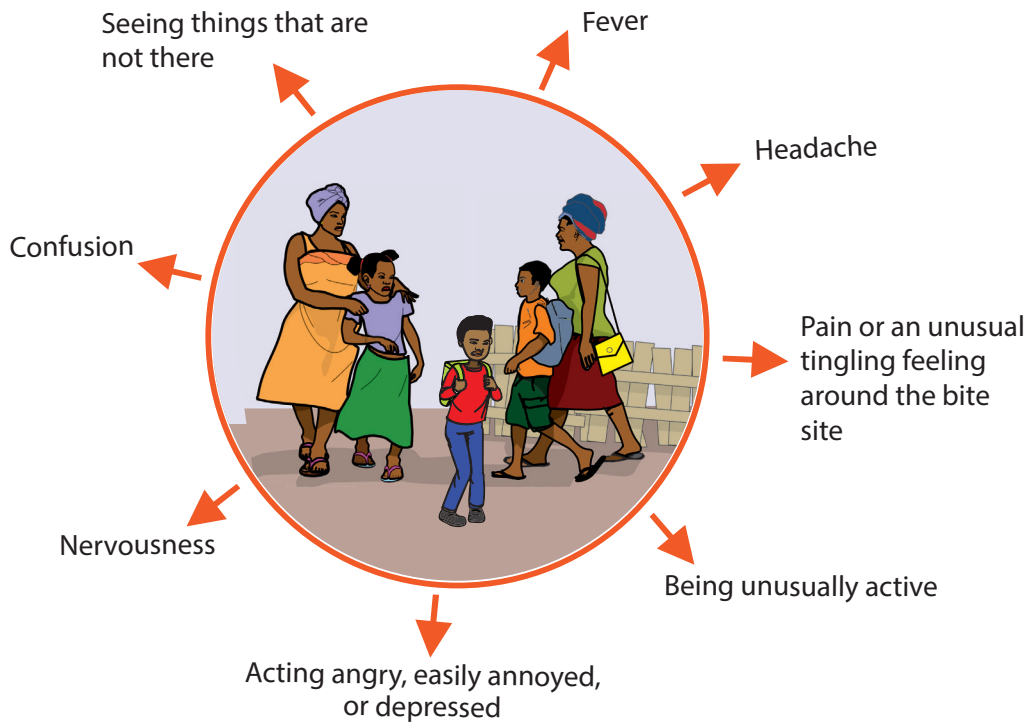


- When a dog or any other animal is infected with the rabies virus, it may take several months before the onset of the signs and symptoms. Once an animal begins to show the signs and symptoms of rabies, it will die within one to ten days.



WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF RABIES IN HUMANS?

- **The signs and symptoms of rabies in humans include:**



The length of time from when rabies enters a person's body to when the person starts to show signs and symptoms is usually 2-3 months, but sometimes can vary from one week to one year.

Depending on the site of the bite, the length of time it takes before the signs and symptoms begin to show are different for each person.

- o The closer the site is to the brain/head, the shorter the time signs and symptoms begin to appear.

Once the signs and symptoms of rabies begin to show, the person will die within a few days.

- o That is why it is so important to go to the nearest health facility or contact a Community Health Officer/Nurse immediately after an animal bite or scratch for assessment and treatment of the wound.



CAN RABIES BE PREVENTED?

Yes, by avoiding the bite or scratch of a dog, a cat, or any other animal.

NO BITE! NO SCRATCH! = NO RABIES

There are simple steps you can take to help reduce the risk of getting rabies.

- 1 When bitten or scratched by a dog, a cat or any other animal, immediately wash the part of your body that has been bitten or scratched with soap under running water continuously for 15 minutes or more.



2

After washing, go immediately to the nearest health facility, or contact your Community Health Nurse for advice and treatment of the wound.



3

Report the dog bite or scratch case also to the nearest veterinary office for assessment of the dog and advice.



CAN RABIES BE TREATED?

There is no treatment for rabies once signs and symptoms begin to show.

A person with rabies will die within a few days, after showing the signs and symptoms of the disease.

That is why it is important to go to the nearest health facility immediately after a bite or scratch for advice and treatment of the wound.

The health facility or your Community Health Nurse may vaccinate you to protect you from developing rabies through the prompt administration of post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP). The rabies vaccine is given in a series of five shots over 21 days.

- The first dose of the vaccine is given the day of the bite or scratch, and then a dose of the vaccine given at day 3, 7, 14 and 21.
- The PEP prevents you from getting rabies if all the five shots are taken within the 21 days.

Getting PEP treatment immediately after you are bitten or scratched by a dog or any animal can stop rabies.



TIPS TO PREVENT DOG BITE

1

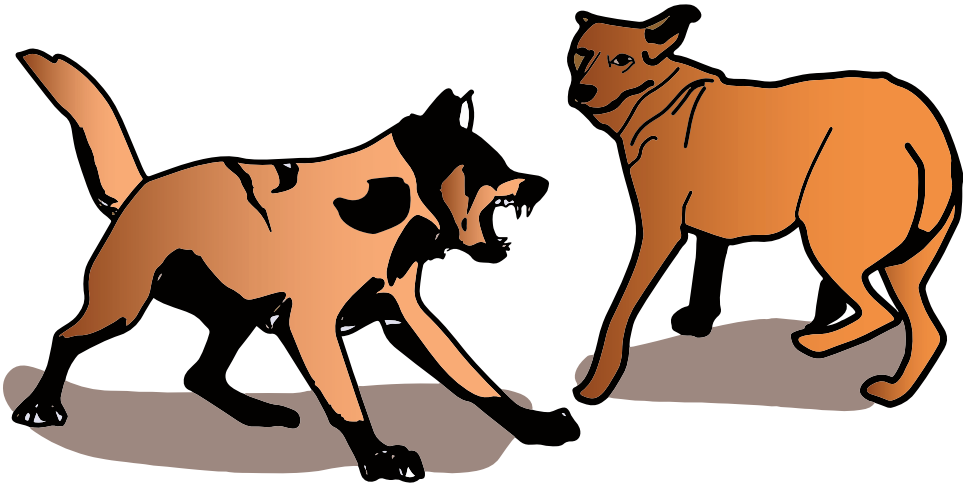
Do not disturb dogs especially when they are sleeping, eating or with their young ones.

- Dogs might bite when they are surprised, afraid, or are trying to protect something like their food, or their young ones.



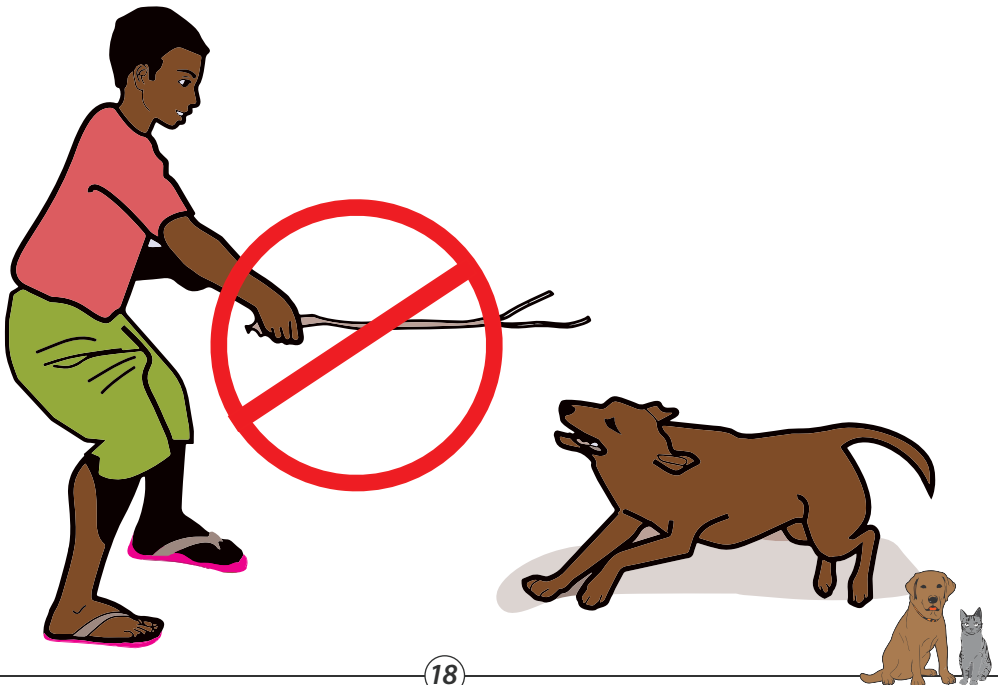
2

Stay away from dogs when they appear angry or scared.



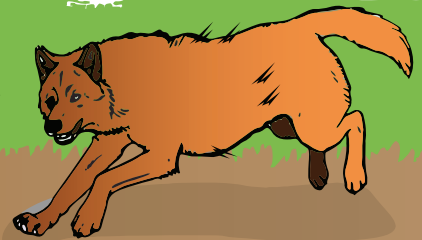
3

Do not play, touch, or get close to a stray dog and animals, even if they look friendly.



4

Stay still and calm when a dog approaches you.



5

Be careful when passing or entering where a dog lives.

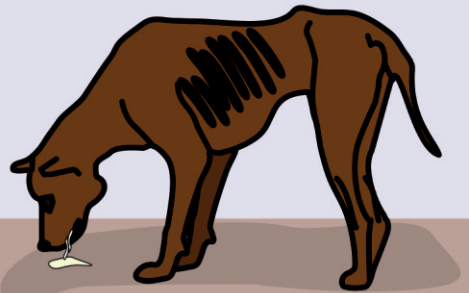
- Many people keep dogs to protect themselves and their homes.
- Taking your time when passing or entering an area where a dog lives, can help a dog know you are not a threat.



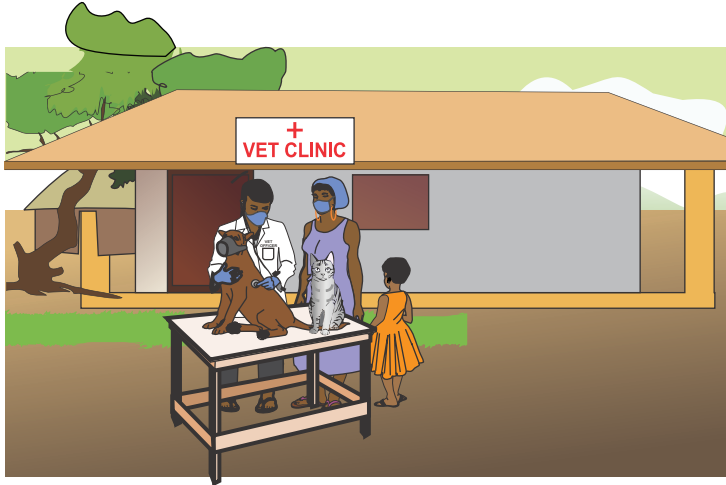
6

Stay away from any dog that is acting strangely or looks sick.

- A dog that is acting strangely or looks sick might have rabies or some other sickness and more likely to bite if you go near it.



BE A RESPONSIBLE PET OWNER



Take your dog for veterinary care when it is sick or hurt, and also for routine check-up.



Vaccinate your pets such as dogs and cats each year to prevent rabies.
Make sure you obtain a valid rabies vaccination certificate.





Feed your dog with healthy food and clean water regularly to prevent them from roaming for food.

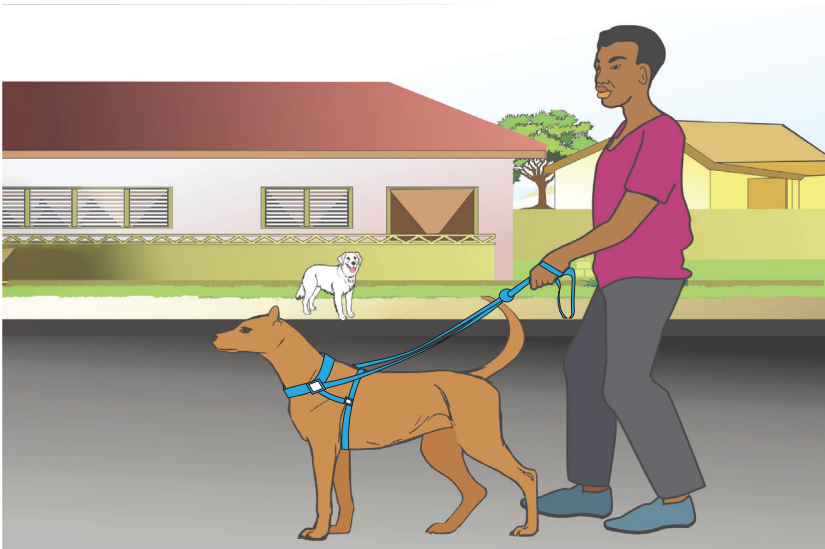


Regularly bathe your dog and ensure the dog is free from ticks, fleas and other pests.





Keep your dogs in the yard or enclosed area to avoid contact with rabid dogs and other animals.



Frequently take your dog for a walk on a leash, to keep it fit and healthy.





If your dog or cat bites or scratches you or any other person, immediately wash the part of your body that has been bitten or scratched with soap under running water continuously for 15 minutes or more.



After washing, go immediately to the nearest health facility, or contact your Community Health Nurse for advice and treatment.





Always wash your hands and arms with soap under running water immediately after any contact with a dog or cat, even if it looks healthy.



WHAT A TEACHER SHOULD DO:



If any student comes to you WITH A DOG BITE OR SCRATCH

1. Guide the child to wash the wounds immediately with soap under running water continuously for at least 15 minutes.
2. Go with the child immediately to the nearest health facility for assessment and treatment.
3. Inform the parent or guidance of the child about the dog bite or scratch and the actions taken.
4. Please refer to the Message Guide for Priority Zoonotic Diseases in Ghana for further information.



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Ghana Health Service

