

# RISK PERCEPTION AND PREVENTION BEHAVIORS

Perception of risk was varied. Low perceived risk of rabies was characterized by low knowledge.

“Talking of people getting sick through animals is something our people don't have that type of awareness and concern. It will be good for them to be aware so that they will know how to keep themselves safe.”

## LEVELS OF RISK

### HIGH LEVEL OF RISK AND CONCERN

**53%** were **very** concerned about rabies

**29%** were **somewhat** concerned about rabies

Lack of awareness about rabies generated high concern.

“We are concerned because we understand that most of the sickness we get is from the animals we rear in the community, but most people do not know of it because there is no awareness in the community on how to care about the animals we rear.”

“everyone has concern and want to know.”

“Before, we were told about HIV/AIDS, it happens. The next thing we were told about the Ebola, we saw it with our eyes. What else the white people will tell us that will not happen?”

The increased emphasis on zoonosis in the district has sparked some concern for rabies among community members:

### LOW LEVEL OF RISK AND CONCERN



“It is not that much heavy here.... well that is just something we don't naturally attached much importance to since the level of awareness is not that strong.”

## VULNERABLE GROUPS

“Generally, everyone here has to do with animals so I cannot personally pinpoint a particular group that they are the ones that are more interacting with the animals. Young, middle, old, men, women...all of these do interact with the animals.”



Almost everyone in the community has some interaction with an animal, so everyone is at risk:

hunters, fullahs - cattle rearers, farmers in contact with roaming animals, livestock traders, children who care for and play with animals, butchers and slaughter house workers, consumers of meat

## RISK FACTORS FOR RABIES

### STRAY & UNCONFINED DOGS

Participants believed that poor animal care increased the risk of dangerous encounters with animals.

**31%**

of participants reported that all stray dogs had rabies

“People refused to feed them [dogs] and allow the animal to search for food. Due to this reason sometimes makes the dog to become more aggressive to people even if you the owner is not careful it will hurt you.”

In households with no children to assist with the care of animals, owners often “leave the animals unchecked” and loose in the community “without any control” to look for food themselves. In densely populated areas, it is a challenge to find the space for animal structures so animals roam freely outside.

### SCRATCHES & BITES

**10%**

of participants reported that they had been scratched or bitten by a pet

**5%**

of participants reported that they had been scratched or bitten by a stray animal

### DRY SEASON

There are often shortages of both food and water. Some families often do not have enough food supplies for their household members, so the needs of animals become secondary.

# RISK FACTORS FOR RABIES

## SCRATCHES & BITES

“During the Ebola, we were told that we should not eat bush animals, but after the Ebola many people have forgotten ... some are saying that they have been eating bushmeat for a long time now.”

52% prepared bush meat

71% regularly ate bush meat

16% ate dog meat

## EATING MEAT OF DEAD & SICK ANIMALS

15% handled a sick animal

21% prepared & ate a sick animal

“Some people upon seeing an animal exhibiting abnormal signs, the next target is kill that animal and eat straightway which is perhaps the root cause of contracting sickness from animals.”

## PROXIMITY TO ANIMALS



Animals share the living and sleeping spaces of their owners at nighttime to prevent them from being stolen.

“Sometimes the owner sleep with their animals in the same place so there is a chance for this animal to transfer airborne disease to its owner.”

“Others do not have a house on their own and others have a single room, so if you have your animal there is no place to keep except inside your bedroom to avoid thieves not to steal them at night.”

## POVERTY

“One of the owners told me one day that food for them is not enough, let alone they give to the animals, so that is one of the main reason why they leave them roam around freely.”

## PLAYING WITH ANIMALS

Play was a way that animals pass on their sickness to other animals and to people, especially children.

“If they [dogs] are allowed to stray in the street and return home at night pass a disease to the children by playing with them.”

# RABIES PREVENTION BEHAVIORS

## KILL STRAY DOGS

The high level of concern about rabies has influenced some violence against dogs. Some individuals quickly dispose of dogs that they perceived to be strays, sick, or without owners, in brutal ways.

“When we see such [stray] animals, especially the dogs, alarm is raised by galvanizing the youth to kill that dog immediately to prevent it causing problem in the community.

## CONFINE ANIMALS

Many participants believed that all stray dogs were infected with rabies

## RESPONSE TO HIGH RISK INTERACTIONS

73% WENT TO HEALTH FACILITY



67% POURED SPIRIT ON WOUND



61% WENT TO COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER



47% WASHED WOUND



45% REPORTED TO AHW/LO/VET



14% WENT TO PHARMACY



# RECOMMENDATIONS

Provision of information about transmission pathways for rabies, and education about behavioral risk that references norms and daily activities in communities and uses examples that are salient to community members. Community-based interventions that directly engage community members in dialogue, and behavior change activities that support the context of community life, may influence acceptance and adoption of rabies prevention behaviors.

Expansion of Animal Health Clubs to facilitate an interpersonal approach to engaging communities in rabies prevention programs. These clubs also may support and reinforce other large-scale communication approaches that provide information about rabies to the general public.

Additional research may also help to better understand factors that influence poor care given to, and abandonment of, dogs.