Reviewer’s report

Title: The first field trial with oral vaccination of dogs against rabies in the Philippines

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Reviewer: Arthur King

Level of interest: A paper whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Advice on publication: Accept after revision, which I do not need to see

The first field trial with oral vaccination of dogs against rabies in the Philippines.

This paper describes a small-scale trial of dog oral vaccination (OVD) against rabies carried out in a discreet area of the Philippines. The authors have rightly pointed to the need for a supplementary policy to the parenteral vaccination of dogs in many countries where, for a variety of reasons, dogs are inaccessible for parenteral vaccination. In their preliminary studies the authors have followed WHO required standards of vaccine safety and efficacy for target and non-target species and of bait acceptability by the local dog population.

Currently, a major constraint of OVD is the costs of vaccine-bait manufacture and delivery. The authors have tackled the first of these problems by using a polyvinyl chloride capsule with serrated edges and sealed with an aluminium foil cover, slid into boiled sections of the large intestine of pigs. They estimate the cost of this bait at US$0.01, which is remarkably low.

The vaccine strain used was SAD B19 which has been extensively and safely used in European fox rabies eradication campaigns. However, over the years some doubt has been cast on the safety of this strain for nontarget species and these doubts are likely to continue if this strain is used on a large scale in areas where much closer contact with humans is to be expected.

Before the vaccination campaign was carried out, local dog population studies and public information dissemination were carried out. Although the number of dogs eventually given vaccine baits was rather small and
the campaign was made difficult by inclement weather (typhoons), 10 of 14 dogs bled 29 days after vaccination had antibody levels of >0.5I.U. and the remaining four dogs had seroconverted to at least 0.21 I.U.

The authors have adequately described a small scale OVD experiment, of interest to many other workers in this field. Their paper would have benefited from an attempt to cost the exercise since in order to contribute to the debate of the best rabies control policy for the poorer countries.

1. Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown: if not, what are the shortcomings and could they be overcome?
The conclusions are adequate.

2. Are sufficient details provided to allow replication of the work or comparison with related analyses: if not, what is missing?
Sufficient details of what was done are provided, but the number of animals involved was rather small, as was the area of operation.

3. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition: if not, what is missing?
The manuscript adheres to the relevant standards.

4. Is the writing acceptable?
The writing is acceptable. There are some small corrections that need to be made and these are indicated on the hard copy. One reference in the bibliography is not present in the text and there are perhaps more references than the paper demands.

**Competing interests:**

None declared.