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Rabies: United Nations Adds a New Web Site to Its Arsenal in Fight Against Rabies

By **DONALD G. McNEIL Jr.**

The [United Nations](#) Food and Agriculture Organization has begun a [global rabies Web site](#) to encourage nations around the world to bring the disease under control.

[Rabies](#) has been around since antiquity, and death from it is prolonged and agonizing, with the victim succumbing to terrifying [hallucinations](#) and fear of water. (In French, it is called "la rage.")

In poor countries, many victims are children bitten by stray dogs. In the United States, it is rare in pet cats and dogs, but often found in wild foxes, skunks, raccoons and bats. (The Pro-MED Web site, which tracks emerging diseases, recently posted [articles from local American papers](#) describing 16 attacks by rabid animals in just the month of June.)

In recent years, much progress has been made against rabies. If bitten, humans now get five shots in the arm, not 20 painful ones with long needles in the abdomen. New oral vaccines can be hidden in baits; Europe used these to drive rabies in wild foxes down to a fraction of its previous frequency. The United Nations encourages poor countries to use them on stray dogs. The new Web site gives health officers detailed advice on, for example, [restraining dogs and cats](#) for vaccination.