



1931 N. Meacham Rd.
Suite 100
Schaumburg, IL
60173-4360
phone 847.925.8070
800.248.2862
fax 847.925.1329
www.avma.org

November 16, 2009

Mr. Amen Abaza
Minister of Agriculture
Egypt

Mr. Abaza and respected members of the Ministry of Agriculture,

I am writing on behalf of the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), established in 1863 and the largest veterinary medical association in the world. As a not-for-profit association established to advance the science and art of veterinary medicine, the AVMA is a recognized voice for the veterinary profession. The association's more than 78,000 members comprise approximately 85% of U.S. veterinarians, all of whom are involved in a myriad of areas of veterinary medical practice including private, corporate, academic, industrial, governmental, military, and public health services.

It has come to the attention of the AVMA that the Ministry is considering culling stray dogs and cats in an attempt to curb the spread of the 2009 H1N1 influenza virus. We believe this decision is misguided, because science tells us this approach is unlikely to produce the desired effect.

The 2009 H1N1 influenza virus pandemic is spread primarily from person to person. To date, the virus has been confirmed in two cats in the United States. No dogs have been confirmed to be infected with the virus. There are nearly 82 million cats and 72 million dogs in the United States—two affected cats in 154 million pets confirms that the incidence of the virus in pets is extremely low. In addition, all of the affected pets (pet ferrets included) were infected by their owners, and there is no evidence that the infected pets spread the virus to people or to other animals. Furthermore, the pets that became infected had been in close and consistent contact with their ill owners. Because strays are not likely to have this degree of prolonged contact with ill people, they are unlikely to become infected and even less likely to spread the virus.

According to the World Health Organization's statement on November 12, the pets infected with the 2009 H1N1 virus were "isolated events and pose no special risks to human health."

Culling has not been shown to be a successful method of controlling stray populations. Research has shown that even in cases where zoonotic disease rates are high amongst stray populations, culling is typically an ineffective means for protecting public health.¹ Culling plans tend to be undermined by non-compliance or resistance by groups that oppose lethal programs,² and even with an assiduously applied culling program stray populations quickly rebound.³

We urge you to reconsider the situation, base future decisions to control the spread of 2009 H1N1 on available science, and pursue alternative methods for controlling stray dog and cat populations, in addition to promoting proper hygiene and sanitation methods to decrease the spread of the 2009 H1N1 virus in the human population of Egypt.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W. R. DeHaven". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

W. Ron DeHaven, DVM, MBA
CEO, American Veterinary Medical Association

1. Lacerda MM. The Brazilian Leishmaniasis Control Program. MemInst Oswaldo Cruz 1994; 89: 489-95.

Ashford DA, David JR, Freire M, David R, Sherlock I, Eulalio MC, Samaio DP, Badaro R, 1998. Studies on the control of visceral leishmaniasis: impact of dog control on canine and human visceral leishmaniasis in Jacobina, Brazil. AmJ Trop Med Hyg 59: 53-57

2. A.Gavgani, M.Hodjati, H.Mohite, C.Davies. Effect of insecticide-impregnated dog collars on incidence of zoonotic visceral leishmaniasis in Iranian children: a matched cluster randomised trial. The Lancet, Volume 360, Issue 9330, Pages 374-379

3. Slater, M.R. 2005. The welfare of feral cats. In The welfare of cats, ed. I. Rochlitz, 141-176. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.