



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES, WATER AND LAND REFORM

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VETERINARY PUBLIC NOTIFICATION NO 19 OF 2025

DETECTION OF RABIES IN CAPE FUR SEAL AT WALVISBAY LAGOON, ERONGO REGION

(Issued in terms of the Animal Health Act, 2011)

The Directorate of Veterinary Services in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Land Reform hereby informs the general public about the confirmed case of Rabies that has been detected in a **Cape fur seal** at Walvisbay Lagoon, Erongo Region. The Cape fur seal was observed with clinical signs highly suspected to be of Rabies on 13 June 2025, succumbed to the disease and was sampled on 14 June 2025. The Central Veterinary Laboratory in Windhoek tested and confirmed the seal positive of Rabies on 16 June 2025.

Rabies is a fatal disease caused by neurotropic viruses of the Genus *Lyssavirus* in the family *Rhabdoviridae* and is transmissible to all mammals with a 100% mortality. The disease is most commonly transmitted by a bite of rabid animal and saliva of warm-blooded infected host. In humans, Rabies is almost invariably fatal if post-exposure prophylaxis is not administered prior to the onset of symptoms. The disease is endemic in Namibia and the most common source of exposure of humans to Rabies virus is the dog. However, this is the first case of a seal reported in Namibia, although South Africa has first reported **Rabies in Cape fur seals in June 2024**, marking the first known outbreak of Rabies in marine mammals in the region and one of the very few globally.

We would like to urge the public, to be on the lookout for any of the following signs/symptoms in Cape fur seals and report to the nearest Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Land Reform (State veterinary office).

The common signs are:

- **Aggressive behaviour:** Seals may become unusually hostile, attempting to bite people, animals, or objects.
- **Disorientation and uncoordinated movement:** Infected seals often appear confused or struggle to move properly.
- **Unusual vocalizations:** Rabid seals may emit strange cries, barks, or continuous vocal sounds.
- **Excessive salivation:** Infected seals exhibit excessive salivation or foaming at the mouth.
- **Paralysis:** As the disease progresses, partial or full paralysis can occur, especially in the limbs.
- **Lethargy or unresponsiveness:** Some seals may appear weak or indifferent rather than aggressive.
- Death

In line with the provision of the Animal Health Act, 2011, Rabies is a state-controlled disease; as a result, we would like to advise the public as follows:

- Recognize suspicious behaviour of seals such as unprovoked aggression, biting objects or other seals, disorientation, foaming at the mouth, or odd swimming patterns.
- Avoid contact with Cape fur seals: Do not approach, touch, or feed the seal no matter how peaceful or calm it looks.
- Keep pets and children away from the animal.
- Report Immediately: Contact, the State Veterinarian, Fisheries officials, environment officials, local authorities i.e municipal officials and Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA).

In case of human exposure, the following is advised:

- If bitten or scratched, wash the wound thoroughly with soap and water for 10–15 minutes.
- Seek urgent medical attention and inform the hospital that the seal may be rabid.
- Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) should be administered promptly.
- Report the incident to local health or veterinary authorities.

For further information please contact your nearest state veterinarian.

Dr Johannes Shoopala
A/ Chief Veterinary Officer

