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MONGOOSE RABIES IN ZAMBIA

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Abstract: A preliminary survey suggests that the selous mongoose *(Paracynictis selousi)* does not play a role in the epidemiology of rabies in Zambia.

INTRODUCTION

Mongoose have been incriminated as a reservoir of rabies in Cuba, Grenada and the Republic of South Africa.[1,4,6] To establish if this is true in Zambia, a preliminary survey was undertaken in a 5 Km^2 area adjacent to Mazabuka township (15° 50′S 27° 43′E) in the Southern Province. This area was chosen because of a high prevalance of both jackal and canine rabies. The most common mongoose in the area is the selous mongoose *(Paracynictis selousi).*

CASE REPORT

Twenty selous mongoose were shot during the months of April and May 1976. Corneal, brain and salivary gland smears were examined for rabies by the Fluorescent Antibody Test.[3] Viral isolation was attempted on brains and salivary glands,[5] and sera were collected for determination of rabies antibodies by the mouse serum neutralization test using 50 MLD_{50} and rabies strain CVS-610.[2]

No rabies antigen, virus or neutralizing antibodies were detected in any of the samples. Despite the small sample size and limited collection period, the completely negative results are surprising. This might be explained by the fact that this species lives almost entirely on termites and insects, in contrast to the more carnivorous species elsewhere. Also, they are nocturnal and shy, therefore, they would have little contact with other animals. Thus the selous mongoose likely does not play a role in the transmission of rabies. Further work will have to be done to determine if this is true of other mongoose species in Zambia.

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