

# Republic of South Africa

## News report (February – March 2009)

### Pretoria and Pietermaritzburg

On 28 February–7 March, Dr Meslin met in Pretoria with officials from regional and national institutions as well as the representative and staff of the WHO Country Office involved in the administrative and technical modalities of implementing the first year of the joint WHO/Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation inter-regional project to control human and dog rabies in Pietermaritzburg (KwaZulu-Natal Province).



Meetings were held with all senior project staff and visits took place to the mobile vaccination team (in Greytown district), local dog kennels, vaccination sites (at the periphery of Pietermaritzburg) and the provincial veterinary laboratory (in Allerton). Productive discussions took place among members of the Project Coordinating Committee composed of representatives of provincial and national veterinary services (epidemiology), epidemiology and training, management vet services (south KwaZulu-Natal), state vet rabies diagnostics and communicable disease control. Contacts were established with vaccine suppliers and producers regarding costing of parenteral and oral vaccines.



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Representatives of the regional Ministries of Health and Agriculture met during the visit were highly supportive of the project. Animal population management and welfare are considered an integral part of the project and were assessed in February 2009 by specialists from the World Society for the Protection of Animals on behalf of the joint WHO/Gates Foundation project.

The discussions have made clear that the involvement of WHO and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is stimulating further interest and investment from local authorities to a previously neglected disease. Strong support was expressed for organizing an official project launch involving senior politicians and officials from regional and central levels as well as representatives from WHO and the Gates Foundation on the occasion of World Rabies Day (28 September 2009).



*(Yellow cars of the mobile vaccination team)*