

## For Immediate Release

Contact:           Natasha Joseph  
                          Merial  
                          (678) 638-3690  
                          natasha.joseph@merial.com

                          Rick Stoner  
                          Bader Rutter & Associates  
                          (262) 784-7200  
                          rstoner@bader-rutter.com

## U.S. Rabies Cases among Animals are on the Rise

### Merial Sponsors 2008 *World Rabies Day* to Raise Awareness about Disease

**Duluth, Ga., September 9, 2008** — Merial will partner with international rabies experts to recognize *World Rabies Day* on September 28, 2008. A global effort that raises awareness in support of animal and human rabies prevention, *World Rabies Day* is intended to educate people about the impact of rabies, how it can be prevented and how to eliminate the sources that contribute to the 55,000 rabies-related deaths every year.<sup>1</sup>

Although *World Rabies Day* is a global initiative, the disease is also a local issue. In fact, recent data indicates that rabies cases have been reported in the U.S. in all 48 contiguous states and Alaska, plus cases may be on the rise. In 2006, 6,940 cases of rabies in animals were reported, up from 6,417 the previous year.<sup>2</sup>

"As a trusted world leader in rabies prevention, Merial is proud to be a corporate sponsor of the 2008 *World Rabies Day*," said Dr. Bob Menardi, veterinary spokesperson for Merial. "This is an important partnership that enables Merial to share our expertise by providing disease education, risk factors and tips — like vaccination — that help protect pets against a serious disease like rabies."

As part of *World Rabies Day*, Merial is sponsoring the Student American Veterinary Medical Association's (SAVMA) second annual One-Health Challenge, a contest among member veterinary colleges across North America to raise funds for rabies prevention and control programs. Merial is donating seed money and vaccinations to help veterinary schools host benefit events, educational programs and vaccination clinics. The winning school will receive an on-site rabies symposium sponsored by Merial.

In addition to local efforts, Merial is a key sponsor of the 19<sup>th</sup> annual Rabies In The Americas conference, which brings together an international delegation of researchers, directors of national and municipal programs, laboratory workers and others interested in

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advancing the understanding and prevention of rabies. It will be held from September 28 to October 3, 2008, at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, GA.

Rabies is fatal and is transmissible by a bite from a rabid animal. While no clinical signs show until the virus enters the central nervous system, rabies is always fatal once clinical signs appear.<sup>3</sup> Infected animals often show signs, such as anxiety, aggression, restlessness and erratic behavior.<sup>4</sup> Vaccination is the best way to help protect pets against rabies.

Merial is the world leader in rabies prevention, having produced: more than 100 million doses of RABORAL V-RG<sup>®</sup>, a specialized, safe, oral vaccine approved for immunization of raccoons and coyotes; more than 400 million doses of IMRAB<sup>®</sup> rabies vaccine, which is approved for use in six species;<sup>5</sup> and more than 12 million doses of PUREVAX<sup>®</sup> Feline Rabies Vaccine.

For more information about rabies and *World Rabies Day* visit [www.rabiesawareness.com](http://www.rabiesawareness.com) and [www.worldrabiesday.org](http://www.worldrabiesday.org). Also check out <http://www.rabiesintheamericas.org/Index.asp> for additional details on Rabies in the Americas.

Merial is a world-leading, innovation-driven animal health company, providing a comprehensive range of products to enhance the health, well-being and performance of a wide range of animals. Merial employs more than 5,000 people and operates in more than 150 countries worldwide. Its 2007 sales were nearly \$2.5 billion. Merial Limited is a joint venture between Merck & Co., Inc. and sanofi-aventis. For more information, please visit [www.merial.com](http://www.merial.com).

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<sup>1</sup>World Health Organization. Human and animal rabies. Available at: <http://www.who.int/rabies/en/>. Accessed August 12, 2008.

<sup>2</sup>Blanton JD, Hanlon CA, et al. Rabies surveillance in the United States during 2006. *JAVMA* 2007;231(4):540-556.

<sup>3</sup>Rupprecht CE. *Merck Veterinary Manual* 2007:1067-1071.

<sup>4</sup>Greene CE, Rupprecht CE. Chapter 22 – Rabies and other lyssavirus infections. In: Greene CE, ed. *Infectious Diseases of the Dog and Cat*. 3rd ed. Philadelphia: WB Saunders Co., 2006:167-183.

<sup>5</sup>Data on file at Merial.