

# News Release



For Immediate Release

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## **Merial Strengthens Global Effort to Prevent Rabies *World Rabies Day* aims to raise awareness about real threat of often forgotten disease**

**Duluth, Ga., September 6, 2007** — Merial today announced their commitment to the first-ever *World Rabies Day*, an international effort to raise awareness about the risks of rabies, a preventable but often neglected disease. Set for September 8, the goals of *World Rabies Day* are to heighten understanding of the impact of human and animal rabies, while encouraging prevention to help avoid the more than 55,000 rabies-related deaths that are estimated to occur each year.<sup>1,2</sup>

Merial has joined several organizations – including the Alliance for Rabies Control (ARC), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) -- as one of the primary corporate sponsors supporting *World Rabies Day*, both in the United States and internationally.

“With tens of thousands of preventable deaths around the globe attributed to rabies every year, we can’t afford to let down our guard, said Charles Rupprecht, MS, VMD, PhD, Chief of the Rabies Program at CDC. “We hope that the *World Rabies Day* initiative will raise awareness of the genuine threat of rabies and keep prevention top of mind.”

Planned as an annual awareness campaign, *World Rabies Day* events will be scheduled every year in early September, with key events taking place this year on September 8. Merial is underwriting many initiatives supporting this international event. These initiatives focus on public education about rabies and responsible pet ownership.

In the United States, Merial is a contributing sponsor of a public rabies meeting to be held September 7<sup>th</sup> at the CDC headquarters in Atlanta. In addition, Merial is helping by

providing monetary support to Student American Veterinary Medical Association (SAVMA) chapters at 26 veterinary colleges across North America. These chapters are hosting a variety of student-sponsored *World Rabies Day* events, including 5K runs and dog jogs, rabies vaccination clinics for pets and public education outreach programs. Funds raised from these events will benefit the Alliance for Rabies Control, an international, non-profit agency whose mission is to reduce human suffering and death due to rabies through education and canine vaccination programs. These programs help to protect people from rabies, while preserving our canine companions.

To help encourage participation in these local *World Rabies Day* events, Merial is sponsoring a contest between the SAVMA chapters. The school with the highest percentage of students participating will win an on-site rabies symposium, sponsored by Merial, in the spring of 2008. The symposium will include international speakers who will help give the audience a global perspective on this public health threat.

Internationally, in collaboration with the CDC and other partner organizations, Merial will:

- support rabies education at various veterinary medicine symposiums, including one in Russia
- support dog vaccination programs in Nepal
- distribute 12,000 rabies prevention education posters in Africa
- contribute to various educational events focusing on rabies control in Pakistan, which has more than 2000 human deaths from rabies each year<sup>3</sup>

"As a global leader in the animal health care industry – especially in advanced rabies vaccine technology for both companion animals and wildlife – Merial is in a unique position to bolster *World Rabies Day* efforts," said Joanne Maki, DVM, MS, PhD, technical advisor for Veterinary Public Health at Merial. "We are committed to ensuring that veterinarians and health officials across the globe have the tools they need to help prevent rabies transmission."

The idea for *World Rabies Day* began in the fall of 2006 during discussions among public health professionals attending an international "Rabies in the Americas" meeting in Brazil. The concept was quickly embraced by many stakeholders in rabies prevention arena, and for the past 10 months momentum has been building around the globe.

### **About Merial**

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 approximately 5,000 people and operates in more than 150 countries worldwide. Its 2006 sales were nearly \$2.2 billion. Merial Limited is a joint venture between Merck & Co., Inc. and Sanofi-Aventis. For more information, please see [www.merial.com](http://www.merial.com) and [www.rabiesawareness.com](http://www.rabiesawareness.com).

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<sup>1</sup>World Rabies Day Mission. Available at: [http://www.worldrabiesday.org/about\\_rabies\\_en.php](http://www.worldrabiesday.org/about_rabies_en.php). Accessed August 21, 2007.

<sup>2</sup>World Health Organization. Fact Sheet N°99. September 2006. Available at: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs099/en/print.html>. Accessed August 21, 2007

<sup>3</sup>Raza, S. NIH received rabies patients regularly. *Daily Times*. September 19, 2005.

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