

## **Assessment of the anti-rabies campaign in Valenzuela City: Basis for policy improvement**

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**Abstract:** This research underscores the significant role of local government in patronizing and promoting the well-being of human lives, through monitoring and controlling the spread of the rabies virus. This research aims to assess and evaluate the effectiveness of the anti-rabies campaign program being implemented in Valenzuela City, Philippines. The study examines the alignment of local government policies with existing animal welfare laws and regulations, the impact of these policies on public perception, and the measures that can be taken to enhance public awareness and owners in their engagement in the anti-rabies campaign as part of responsible pet ownership. The findings suggest that while the Valenzuela LGU has implemented animal control policies in compliance with the Anti-Rabies Act of 2007, there is a need for more comprehensive policies that address the welfare of humans and non-humans beyond rabies prevention. Furthermore, the study reveals that the policies promoting responsible pet ownership and animal welfare have positively impacted public opinion, with residents demonstrating greater awareness and engagement in animal welfare issues. However, there is still room for improvement in enhancing public awareness and participation in responsible pet ownership. The study suggests that the Valenzuela LGU can increase public outreach efforts, such as community events and educational campaigns, to promote responsible pet ownership and animal welfare. The study also recommends the development of a comprehensive animal welfare program that includes public education, animal rescue and rehabilitation, and the promotion of humane treatment of animals. Hence, the findings demonstrate the need for more comprehensive policies that prioritize humans and non-humans' welfare beyond rabies prevention and highlight the importance of enhancing public awareness and participation in responsible pet ownership. The recommendations developed from the study provide valuable insights for policymakers and stakeholders seeking to improve local government policies promoting responsible pet ownership and anti-rabies campaigns in Valenzuela City and beyond.

**Keywords:** anti-rabies campaign, comprehensive policies, public perception, responsible pet ownership

Date Submitted: May 18, 2025

Date Accepted: May 30, 2025

Date Published: June 13, 2025

## INTRODUCTION

To date, mass vaccination campaigns for community and household cats and dogs, as well as awareness campaigns, have been used in rabies prevention and control efforts. However, because these strategies did not involve all stakeholders—including those in the human, animal, and environmental health sectors—in disease management programs, the burden of rabies has not been reduced (Acharya, et al., 2020).

Pursuant to Republic Act No. 9482 “Anti-Rabies Act of 2007” as declared policy of the State to protect and promote the right to health of the people, together with the Animal Welfare Act of 1998 this Act to protect and promote the welfare of all animals in the Philippines. Towards this end, a system for the control, prevention of the spread, and eventual eradication of human and animal Rabies shall be provided and the need for responsible pet ownership established. The City Government of Valenzuela created a legislation Ordinance No. 131, s. 2014 known as “Anti Rabies Ordinance in the City of Valenzuela.” adopting the provisions of the said law. The ordinance aims to control pet ownership, especially with dogs as they are the main carriers of rabies and exposure to dogs increases the risk of rabies transmission. Under the ordinance, the City Government shall conduct activities and programs that include mass vaccinations, information dissemination campaigns, establishing centralized data banks of registered dogs, impounding of stray dogs, and promoting responsible pet ownership.

Nevertheless, there might be potential for improvements in terms of raising public knowledge and engagement in responsible pet ownership. This research will assess the effectiveness on how the City Government of Valenzuela implements its policy regarding anti-rabies campaign programs that will impact the proper animal control and custody and the promotion of responsible pet ownership. Under the Anti-Rabies Ordinance, the City Government Valenzuela assigned the City Veterinary Services Office, Task Force Disiplina, and City Health Office as the responsible offices to undertake activities and programs and as the implementing agencies of this ordinance.

The Anti-Rabies Ordinance in Valenzuela City was implemented in 2014. This makes the city a good subject for the research on promoting animal welfare and responsible pet ownership. The findings from conducting this research will contribute to the possible realignment or re-development of the animal control and custody policy in the City of Valenzuela.

## METHODOLOGY

This research used a mixed-method in data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of the findings. According to Shorten and Smith (2017), mixed method is a research approach wherein the researchers gather and analyze both quantitative and qualitative data within the same research. By using this method, the researchers were able to analyze numerical and non-numerical data. Thus, enabling them to comprehensively analyze the implementation of the anti-rabies policy and the experiences of the residents about how the policy is being implemented.

As discussed by Mosimann, et al. (2017), mixed-method is necessary for the control of rabies as it involves provision of vaccination services by the government and also community participation at the intermediate level of social resilience. As the problem-driven transdisciplinary project contains epidemiological elements in addition to social dynamics and cultural, political, and institutional challenges, mixed methodologies appear to be required for managing rabies. Mixed-method approach provides a better assessment of individual effectiveness factors including availability, accessibility, sufficiency, or acceptability by adapting earlier effectiveness models for health intervention to rabies management. A better understanding of the relative importance of each effectiveness determinant and the underlying causes rooted in the local perceptions, cultural practices, and social and political realities of the setting is facilitated by the quantitative methods (survey) with qualitative findings (participant response, interview).

This research used Purposive Sampling Technique, also known as judgment sampling, involves intentionally selecting participants based on specific qualities they possess. According to Ilker et. al (2016), this non-random approach does not require underlying theories or a predetermined number of participants. Specifically, Maximum Variation Sampling aims to thoroughly explore a subject by examining it from diverse perspectives, fostering a deeper comprehension. Referred to as "Heterogeneous Sampling," this approach involves selecting participants across a broad spectrum pertinent to the study's focus. This sampling strategy is particularly beneficial in situations where obtaining a random sample is unfeasible, such as when dealing with a restricted sample size. Using this sampling, the researchers were able to gather data from a wide range of respondents which are pet owners and non-pet owners from the three Barangays which are Gen T. De Leon, Marulas, and Karuhatan.

## ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In conducting this research, ethical considerations have been taken into account to ensure that the rights and welfare of all participants are protected. The research has been approved by the academic institutional research review board, and all participants have given informed consent before participating in the study. Any personal information collected during the study will be kept confidential and will only be used for the purpose of this research. The data collected will be analyzed and reported in a way that does not reveal the participants' identities. Furthermore, the research adhered to all relevant ethical guidelines and standards, including those related to data privacy, informed consent, and fair treatment of participants.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researchers were able to come up with the following findings about the research problems. In this part, it demonstrates the summary of findings that the researchers were able to gather from the respondents and key informants.

This research showed that the majority of the respondents understand and have the knowledge about the anti-rabies campaign being implemented in Valenzuela City. However, not all of the respondents were fully satisfied with the way that the campaign is being implemented as it exhibited the lowest mean in the survey conducted.

This implies that the respondents are aware about the implementation of the anti-rabies campaign in Valenzuela City. Majority of the respondents understand the Anti-Rabies campaign

program of the local government of Valenzuela and agreed that through the Anti-Rabies campaign programs, the local government fulfills its responsibility to improve the well-being of residents and their pets. Majority of them also agreed that by implementing the Anti-Rabies campaign, the government protects the welfare of residents and animals.

The majority of the respondents say that the city government should implement mass vaccination for animals. In addition, the respondents think that free vaccination for humans should also be made more available and accessible for the residents. They also wanted the LGU of Valenzuela to improve the management of the City Pound wherein the captured animals are kept.

The respondents have differing opinions on the Anti-Rabies campaign programs. Some people think it's beneficial, while others don't. While the Anti-Rabies program is helpful, some respondents believe that more could be done to encourage participation. They can provide easier access to immunizations for rabies victims. People are being bitten by rabid dogs less frequently these days. They have the capacity to protect those under their authority. This campaign teaches pet owners how to be responsible. As a result, authorities are capable of handling rabies cases and patients. Through these initiatives, the public is educated about anti-rabies efforts and their effects. Microchipping is one of these well-run programs. The number of street animals that are allowed to wander is decreasing, while homeowners' pets are getting free microchips and vaccinations.

On the other hand, according to the respondents, programs that are poorly implemented reduce overall effectiveness. For example, not everyone is able to participate in the free immunization program due to resource limitations. Another situation where incorrect techniques are applied to capture animals is impounding. Not everyone is aware of all the anti-rabies initiatives because there aren't many projects that have been observed, yet they are largely effective. People are partially offended by their merciless dog-capturing. Among the many animals that still roam freely, rabies can still spread. The majority of animal bite centers don't give the public proper information. Free rabies vaccines are no longer available for people who have been bitten by pets or against rabies. The facilities are inadequate even at the barangay level.

There is a significant difference between the level of awareness among the residents towards the implementation of the anti-rabies campaign in Valenzuela City and the demographic profile, specifically, educational attainment of the respondents. However, there is no significant difference between the level of awareness among the residents towards the implementation of the anti-rabies campaign in Valenzuela City and the demographic profile, specifically, age group, gender, residence, duration of stay, and civil status of the respondents.

## CONCLUSION

This research showed the level of awareness, experiences, and public opinion of the residents towards the implementation of the Anti-Rabies campaign in Valenzuela City. It is not without lapses and gaps likewise any other policies and programs. The research demonstrated which aspects of the campaign needs to be improved such as the accessibility of the anti-rabies vaccination for both humans and animals, there is also a need to improve the sharing of the information of the campaign in general and of the knowledge of the residents towards the programs being implemented in the locality with regards to the anti-rabies.

This research also revealed that the participation of the residents towards the anti-rabies campaign is essential for the policies and programs to be effective. The cooperation of residents, may it be the pet owners or non-pet owners, are needed in order for the LGU's objectives to be achieved which is the promotion of the well-being of both the residents and pets. In general, the anti-rabies campaign will be more effective with full participation of the government, NGOs, and residents of the locality. It will be more beneficial with the cooperation, knowledge, and involvement of all the stakeholders. The anti-rabies campaign in Valenzuela City is striving but also needs to be maintained and improved in patronizing the health of residents and pets in the city.

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