

## SUCCESS STORY

DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION  
TO BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA



12.441.834 baits were discharged in total during the programme

### With EU support, BiH is with no cases of rabies since 2015

Rabies is a viral disease of the central nervous system of animals and humans. Primarily, it is a disease of wild and domestic animals which is transmitted to humans by direct contact with infected animals (usually bites). According to the World Health Organization (WHO), more than 55,000 people infected with rabies lose their lives per year worldwide.

Epidemiology analyses confirmed that the fox population acts as a reservoir of rabies in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and thus presents a permanent risk for transmission to humans, either directly or via domestic carnivores. In addition to the conventional rabies control and eradication measures for pet animals (obligatory vaccination against rabies of dogs and of cats recommended), and to control and eradicate rabies in wild populations, in Autumn 2011 the EU supported the Veterinary Office of BiH, which introduced oral vaccination of foxes against rabies (ORV).

Mr. Andrea Vera, Head of the Operations Section for Economic Development, Infrastructure and Natural Resources at the Delegation of the European Union to BiH, points out the fact that *“animal diseases do not recognise borders. The EU treats the entire region as a single epidemiological area, representing our closest neighbours and hopefully soon, our Member States, once*

None of the foxes delivered as part of vaccine monitoring programme tested positive for rabies, and multi-year results show that 70-80% of tested foxes consumed bait in nature one or more times, while 50-75% of the foxes was immunised.

This result indicates a high degree of immunisation of foxes throughout the country, which led to the reduction of the natural circulating rabies virus in the population of the foxes, which is considered the natural reservoir of rabies in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

*IPA countries accede to the EU family. A safe and healthy environment for both humans and animals is one of the crucial priorities of our policies. We are pleased that our investments have contributed to improved animal health in BiH. Strategic control and close cooperation of all stakeholders and our partners in BiH and the entire Western Balkans Region is of crucial importance for the benefit of viably sustaining human and animal health”.*



*Spring 2017 oral vaccination campaign will be 12th in BiH financed by the EU*

The control and eradication programme against rabies in BiH is part of a larger set of EU funded initiatives covering other IPA countries in the Balkans that began in 2011. Since then a total of 11 EU-funded campaigns of oral vaccination of red foxes have been implemented. The latest campaign was concluded in autumn 2016 and an additional one is planned for Spring 2017. In total, IPA funds have provided approximately EUR 8 M for vaccination campaigns and an additional EUR 1 M for technical assistance support for the coordination of animal disease programmes in BiH.

Ljubomir Kalaba, Director of the Veterinary Office of BiH, which coordinates the vaccination programme, underlines the importance of a regional approach to rabies prevention.

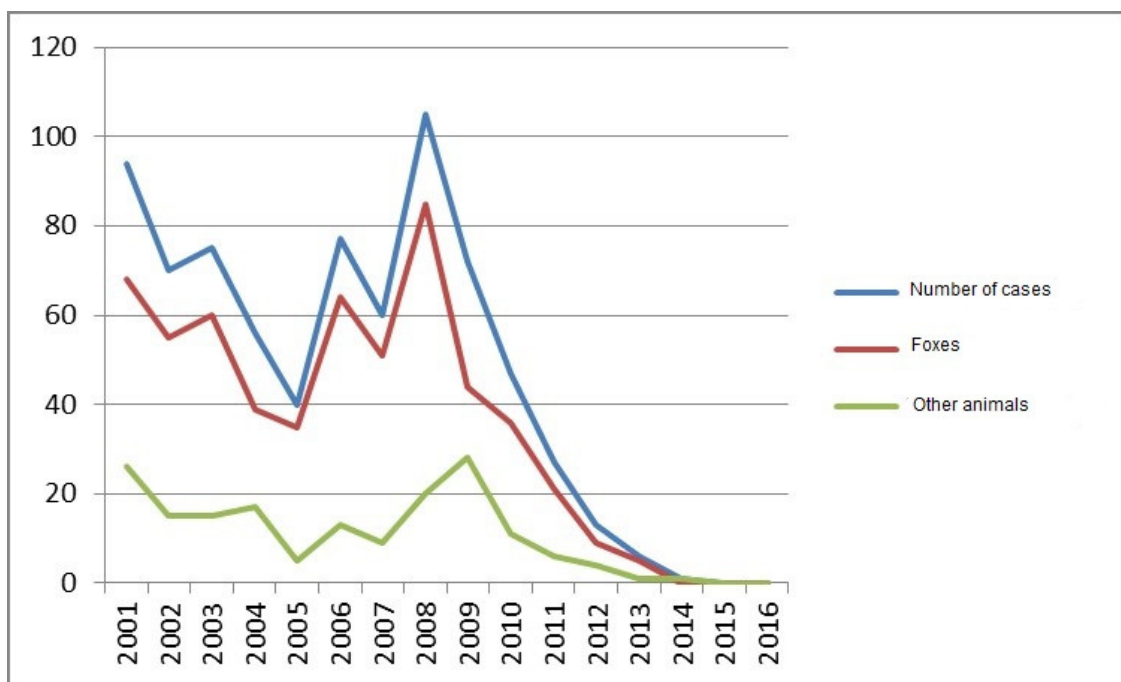
*“The project of oral vaccination of foxes against rabies began as a regional project including all Western Balkans Countries. For Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is vital that bordering countries - Montenegro, Croatia and Serbia - are simultaneously included in the programme, due to the nature of foxes whose movement does not recognize administrative boundaries,”* Kalaba said.

The vaccinations carried out by air distribution of the vaccine baits are part of the strategic programme of control and eradication of animal diseases, especially zoonoses, which are diseases common to people and animals, like rabies. It is coordinated and managed by the Veterinary Office of BiH, in cooperation with Entities and Brcko District's competent authorities. The oral vaccination of wildlife foresees the application of oral vaccination of foxes and other wild carnivores twice a year, in the fall and in Spring, in line with European and international standards. The long-term goal of the programme is the complete eradication of the disease in BiH and maintaining the status of a country free of rabies.



*Oral vaccination campaign started in spring 2011*

The number of rabies cases in BiH in 2008 was 83, while after 2011 and the start of ORV campaign, it reduced to six cases in 2012 and only one case in 2014.



Number of rabies cases in BiH throughout the years

*“Since 2011 and the beginning of implementation of oral vaccination of foxes against rabies in the entire territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the number of cases of rabies has declined significantly. In the last two years not a single positive case in the entire territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina was recorded. The last case of rabies in wild animals is recorded in one fox in the municipality of Laktaši in October 2013, while the last case of rabies in domestic animals was recorded in one dog in the municipality of Gradačac in September 2014, which is a last case of rabies recorded in Bosnia and Herzegovina,”* Kalaba said.

In addition to oral vaccination of wildlife, the rabies eradication programme in Bosnia and Herzegovina includes the efficiency control of implemented vaccinations. The analysis of results of post vaccination monitoring and data about the geographical distribution of the vaccine in the field revealed a high efficiency of vaccination.

*“None of the foxes examined as part of the vaccine monitoring programme tested positive for rabies, and multi-year results show that 70-80% of tested foxes consumed bait in nature one or more times,”* Director Kalaba concluded.

What remains to be done is the implementation of the Ordinance on the identification of dogs, which will boost the size of the dog control group across Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the continuation of the passive control of the foxes via laboratory testing of those foxes found dead or killed on the road and of those that show unusual behaviour indicating the presence of rabies.



EU has provided approx. 8 MEUR for vaccination campaigns

Photos and graphics provided by the Veterinary Office of BiH

Delegation of the European Union  
to Bosnia and Herzegovina  
Skenderija 3a, 71000 Sarajevo,  
Bosnia and Herzegovina

T. 00387 33 254 700  
F. 00387 33 666 037

Please contact Zora Stanic  
in Communication Team via  
[zora.stanic@eeas.europa.eu](mailto:zora.stanic@eeas.europa.eu)  
for any feedback or comments  
on this story.