

2nd rabies case in city

WITNESS - PAGE 2 - 19 APRIL 2018

Pet owners urged to vaccinate their dogs after another confirmed case

CHELSEA PIETERSE

PIETERMARITZBURG has had another positive case of rabies in a dog in the Northdale area, making it the second rabies case in the city in just one month.

A Northdale family brought their dog to the Chase Valley vet earlier this week after the dog fought with another dog on the road near the family's house.

A day after the dog was bitten, he stopped eating and could not swallow. The family decided to take him to the Chase Valley vet.

Test results came back positive for rabies yesterday afternoon.

It is unclear what became of the other dog involved in the fight.

With over 70 confirmed cases of animal rabies in KwaZulu-Natal to date, experts believe the number of positive cases will reach a 10-year high by the end of the year.

With four human deaths in the space of two months, and 76 positive cases in animals, KZN Rabies Project manager Kevin le Roux said he predicts the number of positive animal cases will reach 344 by the end of the year — the highest in 10 years.

However, Le Roux said the multiple campaigns being run across the province to educate animal owners and vaccinate pets have received “an amazing response”.

“All the publicity it has been receiving has seen many people getting their animals treated.

“We have had an amazing response at every level, we just need to keep the momentum going,” he said.

He said the province might see an increase in rabies cases over the next few months.

“Because there has been so much awareness surrounding rabies, people

are now picking up cases that would have otherwise been missed.

“So the number of cases is expected to increase as the hype around the rabies campaign grows,” said Le Roux.

He added, however, that there was a concern that suppliers of the treatment could run out of the rabies vaccine near the end of the year due to the increase in people wanting vaccines.

He said people who have not been bitten, scratched or licked by an animal, but have merely been in the vicinity of an animal, are going for rabies treatment.

If a person has not had any contact with an animal that is thought to be rabid, they would not need treatment, he said.

“Rabies scares the hell out of people, as it should. Animal lovers need to rethink their behaviour around unfamiliar animals.

“Ultimately, we want to get rid of rabi-

es completely, then can people touch whatever animal they want.”

He said rabies remained mostly along the coast, although he added that the disease can show up anywhere at any time.

With multiple campaigns being run, offering free rabies vaccinations across the province, some private vets have decided to also climb on board and help in the bid to eradicate the disease.

Hayfields Vet announced on their Facebook page that they will be running a free rabies clinic on Saturday, April 21 between 12 pm and 1 pm.

“Rabies poses a clear and present danger to our unvaccinated pets and any person who may come into contact with these unvaccinated animals,” they said in their Facebook post.

“It is on our doorstep; with rabies-positive animals confirmed in Pietermaritzburg, Sweetwaters, Camperdown,

Dalton, Greytown, Richmond, Hilton, Curry's Post, Mooi River, Underberg, Kloof, Hillcrest, Durban, and along the North and South coasts.

“For us and our animals' safety, it is critical that we have our pets vaccinated against rabies. Even our dogs and cats that ‘never leave the yard’ must also be vaccinated,” said the post.

“Beside it being the law, rabid animals have unpredictable and often bizarre behaviour. It is not uncommon for a rabid animal to find its way into a fenced property and bite the resident dog or cat.”

Chase Valley Vet said that for the rest of April they are offering free rabies vaccinations between 8 am and 12 pm and 2 pm and 5.30 pm on weekdays. They also offer free rabies vaccinations on weekends between 9 am and 12 pm.

Allerton State Vet also offers the public free rabies vaccinations.
• chelsea.pieterse@witness.co.za