



agriculture & rural development

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PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

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Rabies outbreak has health officials on edge

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WITH four confirmed deaths along the coast and an increasing number of confirmed canine rabies cases along the Drakensberg region of KwaZulu-Natal, the provincial government is considering declaring the outbreak an emergency.

This follows the latest confirmation by post-mortem that the cause of death of six-year-old Ayanda Nkosi of Nseleni in Mpangeni area who died at Nandi Memorial Hospital last month, was also from rabies. Nkosi is the fourth person to die of rabies along the coastal area of KZN. The department of agriculture also confirmed a number of positively identified free ranging rabid jackals recently found in Estcourt, Nottingham Road, Underberg, Geytown, Msinga and Ilembe.

Agriculture MEC Themba Mthembu who led a team of vets in a massive vaccination drive in Esikhaleni in Empanjeni, an area treated as a hot spot, said: "Due to the fact that where there is rabies, there are bound to be human deaths, we decided to first bolster our vaccination clinics in all the hot spots and treat this as an emergency. We will, however, be following all the processes necessary for applying to the national government to declare this officially as



VETTING PROCESS: Chief director Dr Dumisani Mtshali.

an emergency later."

The department's chief director of veterinary services, Dr Dumisani Mtshali, said while it was possible to contain the spread carried by domesticated canines, it was harder to prevent the disease carried by jackals as it presented many complications including being a threat to the local economy as they tend to infect livestock.

"It is a challenge to capture and vaccinate jackals as they are free rangers. Therefore, our containment strategy has been to massively vaccinate cattle and dogs in those areas," Mtshali said.

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