

## RABIES

# Father struggles with child's death following dog bite

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A KwaZulu-Natal father said he was still struggling to cope with the death of his daughter after a suspected long battle with the rabies virus.

Mzomuhle Mhlongo said the dog-bite wound inflicted on his daughter, which supposedly led to the death of his seven-year-old daughter, Andisiwe Kate, remained fresh in his heart.

Kate was laid to rest the previous Saturday in Sindi at KwaMaphumulo. She was hospitalised at Prince Mshiyeni hospital on August 4 and died four days later.

The girl seemed initially fine after being bitten by a dog in June, but her condition took a turn for the worse, earlier this month.

"When she became ill, she struggled to eat or drink and experienced great difficulty with breathing and her overall behaviour had changed, including the way she walked and talked.

"She was able to communicate coherently in the beginning but gradually became unstable," he said.

He said that on the day of the attack, she was bitten on her leg by a dog from their neighbourhood.

That's when the child's grandmother confronted the owner of the dog, who was dismissive and not willing to offer sufficient money for bus fare so that the child could receive the medical attention she required.

After the bite, the grandmother disinfected the wound, with time, she began to complain about pain, hallucinated and cried hysterically.

"At first we sought traditional intervention and she seemed to be responding well to it, but then her situation worsened," said the father.

Kate was taken to a local clinic, before being admitted to Prince Mshiyeni Hospital for treatment but did not make any progress and until her death.

THE LATE  
Andisiwe Kate  
who died  
allegedly from  
rabies after  
being bitten by  
a dog in June  
2023



Vusi Zuma, spokesperson for the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development in KZN, said the MEC had relayed his condolences to the grieving family.

He said the department regularly undertook vaccination campaigns throughout the province and appealed to all sectors of the state and media to join forces in creating rabies awareness to prevention of infection.

About Kate's death, Zuma said they were aware of the incident and awaited for an official report from the relevant authorities.

MEC of Health in KZN Nomagugu Simelane called on community to be vigilant.

According to Dr Jacqueline Weyer, Principal Medical Scientist at the Centre for Emerging and Zoonotic Diseases at the National Institute for Communicable Diseases, rabies was a highly fatal viral infection which affected the brain and central nervous system.

It is transmitted from infected animals, in most cases domestic dogs, to humans through contaminated bites and other wounds.

The virus is present in the saliva of the infected animal.

She said that many different mam-

mals could be affected by rabies. "In South Africa, we see several transmission cycles of domestic dogs and then certain life species including black jackal, certain species of foxes and bat-eared foxes," she said.

"Other domestic and wild animals may, however, also be affected. Most cases are reported in domestic dogs," she said.

Weyer said that the most effective way to control rabies was to vaccinate domestic dogs through vaccination.

She said that during 2023 a total of eight human rabies cases were confirmed and the cases were reported in KZN (4); Eastern Cape (2) and one in Limpopo and that nationally the largest number of rabies cases have been reported in KwaZulu-Natal.

Weyer said that there had been a rise in the number of dog rabies cases in districts of KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape since 2020.