

Vaccination drive in KZN to combat the resurgence of rabies

JYOTHI LALDAS

A spike in rabies infections in the eThekweni Metro area in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) has prompted a vaccination drive in the greater Durban area.

According to the KZN Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, there has been a spike in rabies in the areas of Umlazi, Chatsworth and Mobeni, north of Durban.

As part of a private-public partnership to combat the resurgence of rabies, the department is collaborating with two non-governmental organisations and one international donor for the provision of equipment and medical supplies.

Super Zuma, KZN Department of Agriculture and Rural Development MEC, directed the vaccination drive of dogs and cats in Welbedacht, Chatsworth and the eThekweni Metro in an effort to curb the spread of the disease in these hot-spot areas.

This was also done to raise awareness and prevent a rabies epidemic in the province.

Zuma said he was happy to see pet owners co-operating with the department by bringing their pets for vaccination. "This demonstrates that they care for the lives of the people in the community too."

Zuma said vaccination was important to help quell the spread of the disease to save both human and animal lives, as well as pre-

vent mass infection of livestock, which could traumatise already struggling farmers in the rural parts of the province.

The department also intensified its spaying campaign in the area to control the populations of dogs and cats through sterilisation, which would aid in rabies disease control and animal welfare.

The free vaccination campaign also presented an opportunity for domestic animals that had other health issues and wounds to be treated and attended to.

KZN experienced a massive spike in rabies infections around the same time last year, recording more than 250 cases of animal infections by September 2022 and the confirmed death of a nine-year-old boy in uMqumbi in the iLembe District on the North Coast.

According to the National Institute for Communicable Diseases, rabies was a zoonotic disease with a high fatality rate that was typically contracted after a person had been bitten by a rabid dog.

The main symptoms in dogs include a change in behaviour, wandering off, agitation, strange vocalisations (such as howling), excess salivation and not being able to swallow (appearing to have something stuck in their throats).

Other symptoms were a lack of coordination, dehydration, paralysis of its hind legs, depression, staring eyes, chewing of strange



KwaZulu-Natal Department of Agriculture and Rural Development MEC Super Zuma (left) and department head Zibusiso Dlamini look on as a dog is vaccinated against rabies.
PHOTO: KZNDARD

objects, biting at the air as if there were flies around it and aggression.

Often biting would only occur when the dog was agitated by sound, touch or move-

ment.

According to the department, death normally followed within three days of the onset of symptoms.