

R6m for vaccination

'We have been able to cut down rabies incidents by 90%'

SIBONGISENI MAPHUMULO

THE provincial department of agriculture and rural development has set aside additional money to extend its rabies vaccination campaign in Ilembe and King Cetshwayo district municipalities by six months following the death of a two-year-old boy, who was attacked and bitten by a rabid canine last month.

The department's acting head, Jerry Mfusi, announced the decision during his visit to the family of Nkosinathi Mzimela, who died at Montebello Hospital after a neighbour's dog bit him while playing outside his homestead at Bhamshela in Ndwedwe.

The incident is reported to have happened on August 14. However, the boy was only taken to hospital nine days later on August 22 where he eventually died on August 29.

Mfusi said this death happened two weeks after the department initiated the vaccination campaign due to numerous reports of rabies cases in the areas of Ilembe and King Cetshwayo district councils.

"Even though we have been able to cut down rabies incidents by 90% in the province, we have been receiving reports of rabies in areas like Durban north, Ntumeni, Richards Bay and here in Ndwedwe," Mfusi said.

He said R6m had been set aside for a sustained campaign that will focus on the affected areas for the next six months.

"With this campaign, as the department, we are saying a death even if it is of one person, is not acceptable. The government is going to ensure that the mother receives a grant, that food relief is provided and our department's food and nutrition security unit helps the family cultivate its own food," Mfusi said.

Department of agriculture and rural



CONTROL MEASURES: The department of agriculture and rural development is extending its rabies vaccination campaign in the Ilembe and King Cetshwayo district municipalities. PICTURE: GETTY IMAGES

development south region director for veterinary services Dr Themba Sikhakhane said since the department of health alerted them to the existence of this incident two weeks ago, they have been able to vaccinate a total of 1500 dogs in the area and that three of the dogs that tested positive for rabies were found in a homestead that is neighbouring the Mzimelas.

"Ordinarily, when a person is bitten by a dog, they immediately go to a clinic. However, this did not happen in this case. The rabies treatment is 100% effective if the infection is treated in

time. This was a terrible way to go for a two-year-old boy who had so much future ahead of him," Sikhakhane said.

The department's Umgungundlovu control animal health technician and rabies advisor to the World Health Organisation, Kevin le Roux, said where there are rabid dogs running around without any control measures like in Bhamshela, human deaths are bound to follow.

He warned the communities of Ilembe and King Cetshwayo to avoid contact with any abnormally behaving dogs.

"Rabid dogs often lose their sense of

territory or boundaries and can stray 20km away from home thus extending the area of threat. Therefore, the best rabies control starts with the education of people," Le Roux said.

He said while KZN was classified as having the best rabies management system in the whole of Africa, which now uses it as a model, that classification came after the province's spending of R60m a year on human rabies cases and sustained vaccination campaigns like the one in the affected districts.

news@thenewage.co.za