



“Asiguqule ezoLimo zibe isikompilo lethu”

**REMARKS BY THE KZN MEC FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL
DEVELOPMENT**

THE HONOURABLE THEMBA MTHEMBU

**DURING THE WORLD RABIES DAY VACCINATION AND STERILISATION
CAMPAIGN IN SHALLCROSS, DURBAN**

28 September 2017

Today we gather in celebration of World Rabies Day, but as a Province however, we are in mourning following the recent death of a two year old child in Bamshela, in iLembe District, subsequent to him being bitten by a dog infected with Rabies. Further damning, is that more cases have been reported since then, namely in the King Cetshwayo, Ndwedwe, umShwathi and eThekweni areas.

Rabies is prevalent in all continents, specifically in Asia and Africa as 95% of all cases reported stem from these regions. Global statistics reveal that more than 15 million people annually receive post-exposure vaccination to prevent the disease – this is estimated to prevent hundreds of thousands of rabies deaths. And while all age groups are vulnerable to the disease, rabies has been found to be more common amongst male children aged below 15 years.

This global phenomenon, presents to us the colossal work we have ahead of us to curb the spread of this fatal disease, especially as Rabies is a 100% vaccine-preventable disease.

Earlier in the year, in May to be exact, we launched the Departmental Primary Health Care Programme alongside the Compulsory Community Service for new graduates. These were both in light of creating awareness, educating communities on animal health care and management while also providing advice and services such as vaccinations which are unavailable in many rural and semi-urban areas.

Research has revealed that people most at risk from rabies, live in rural areas where human vaccines and immunoglobulin are not readily available or accessible. Mass vaccination and education campaigns have already been kick-started as can be witnessed today, and will sweep across the Province with special focus on those areas that have reported incidences spreading from Inanda to Richards's bay. Provisional educational material, vaccines and consumables have been distributed and we have set aside funding to fast-track the vaccination of at least 70% of the dogs in the Province to ensure success in our rabies elimination programme.

I must also mention that in the Province, we have previously had an incident of an attack by the black-backed jackal in Howick. These wild animals as well as domestic livestock are also susceptible to the disease however, frequent cases in the Province are linked to dog infection.

As we mark 182 years since the first rabies vaccine was administered, we have to celebrate that in our Province, we have enjoyed great success in fighting rabies. Since 2007 in partnership with NGO's and the private sector, KZN Veterinary staff have managed to reduce animal rabies by 90% in the Province from 473 cases down to 47. Furthermore, the Province had no reported incidences for over a year (18 months) prior to the recent reports, meaning we had managed to stay rabies free in the Province for 18 months, the longest period in 40 years.

What remains the key measure to conquering this disease will be working together, and teaching our people measures they can take to deal with rabies, people who have been bitten must know that they need to wash the wound under running water for more than 5min, clean the wound with any disinfectant available to them and if possible, rush to the nearest health facility or call an ambulance as dog bites are recognised as an emergency in the Province.

I would also like to appeal to community members to learn to recognise rabies symptoms in dogs. These could range between depression, aggression, staring eyes, salivation, incoordination, and sometimes a howling bark. In such cases, report this to your nearest state or private veterinary clinic.

Let us together, work towards being a healthy Province with zero rabies infections as reflected in the theme for this year's World Rabies Day, **Zero by 30** in support of the global goal of zero deaths from canine-mediated rabies by 2030.



KZN DARD MEC Themba Mthembu together with KZN DARD State Veterinarian Cameron Kutwana, observing the vaccination and sterilisation process at Shallcross in Durban as part of the World Rabies Day commemorations in the Province



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For more information, please contact Khaye Nkwanyana on 082 464 8889