

Worry as stray dogs bite 1,000 Busia residents

The risk. The victims are at risk of contracting rabies because the animals are not vaccinated.

BY DAVID OWORI
editorial@ug.nationmedia.com

BUSIA. The high prevalence of dog bites in Busia District is worrying day by day as 1,000 residents are reported to have been victims in the past 10 years.

Dr Patrick Barasa, the district veterinary officer, revealed that on a weekly basis, at least five cases are reported in the district.

"We have several cases of people reporting with animal bites, majority of who are children and women," Mr Barasa revealed.

"This number is too high and calls for urgent intervention. The district is leading in the cases of dog bites in the country," he added.

He warned that people bitten

30

NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO DIE OF RABIES ANNUALLY

by these animals are at risk of contracting rabies because the animals are not vaccinated.

Statistics from the district veterinary office documented between 2004 and 2017 indicate that more than 30 people die of rabies annually.

Mr Barasa said dog bites are rampant in all the 16 sub-counties in the district, with Lunyo Sub-county, Western and Eastern divisions in Busia Municipality recording the highest numbers.

He attributed the high num-



Seeking help. A mother and her child at Busia veterinary offices after they were bitten by stray dogs recently. PHOTO BY DAVID OWORI

bers of bites to the presence of many jackals, mongoose, foxes and stray dogs, which are not vaccinated.

Mr Barasa identified a resident of Buchicha village in Sikuda Sub-county who died last year after he was attacked and bitten by a cat.

"To manage victims of animal bite, sometimes we have

to follow up the dog so that it is killed and the head taken for analysis before referring the victims for treatment," said Mr Barasa, adding that patients are treated using the human rabies vaccines which are available at Masafu Hospital.

Dr Emmanuel Tusiime, the in-charge of Masafu Hospital, said they receive three patients

complaining of animal bites every week, which has led to frequent stock-outs of the rabies human vaccines.

Dr Tusiime explained that the rabies viral disease spreads from animals to people at a very high rate if the victims do not seek treatment and complete the required dosage.

Symptoms

He explained that patients who suffer from the rabies virus in the later stages of the disease show signs of vomiting, headaches, hydrophobia (fear of water), fever, pain around the bite site, mental disturbance and convulsion.

Ms Jane Marende, who lost her husband to the rabies virus last year, said they failed to get treatment in all health facilities in the district.

"We were forced to take him across the border to Kenya from where he died," she said.

Dr Moses Mwanja, the national rabies focal person in the ministry of Agriculture, said treatment of rabies is very expensive with the post exposure vaccine going for between Shs150,000 and Shs300,000 for a complete dose.

PREVALENCE

Dr Sylvia Baluka Ngubwa, the president of the Uganda Veterinary Association who had pitched camp in Busia to oversee the rollout of vaccination exercise, said the district has been ranked with the highest cases of rabies in the whole country. "The rate of dog multiplication is too high, leading to many of them straying and getting in contact with wild animals which are reservoirs to the disease," she said.