

Equip hospitals with rabies drug

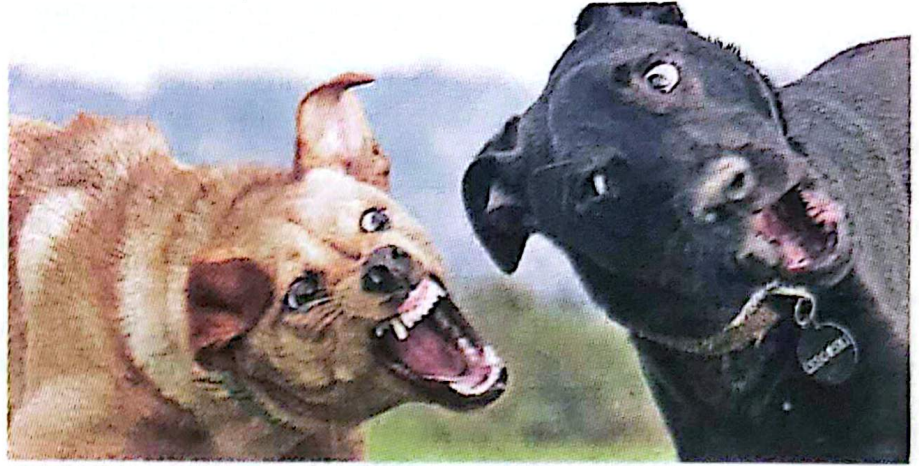
The alarming rate of dog bites mostly on women and children, reported across the country, raise serious concern. Cases of dog and cat bites have been reported in Busia District nearly on a weekly basis, majority of victims being women and children! Other bites hard-hit districts include Arua, Iganga, Kagadi, Kasese, Kabale, Bunyangabu, Kabarole, Masaka and Kampala.

However, despite the rising problem, reports indicate that procurement of anti-rabies serum, a vaccine for treating the bites victims, is very expensive. The post-exposure vaccine costs between Shs150,000 and Shs300,000 for a complete dose. Unfortunately, many rabies victims can hardly afford treatment and they end up dying.

According to media reports, Ms Jane Marende, lost her husband to rabies virus last year after they failed to get treatment in all health facilities in Busia District. It is further reported that the parishes of Kakoga, Kadimbiro, Kakinga and Nyambimwa parishes in Bunyangabu District have registered 15 cases of rabies there are no drugs for treating the victims. In Kabale District, the only health centre that has anti-rabies vaccine is Kamukira Health Centre IV located in Kabale municipality.

Citing such scenarios, there is need for the relevant authorities to urgently take action to contain the spread of rabies virus. Rabies is a viral killer disease, which calls for urgent attention.

The government should roll out strategic interventions and programmes of vaccinating all dogs and other pets such as cats and monkeys. District authorities should



enact by-laws and ordinances to require owners to control their pets. I suggest that stray dogs should be killed using poison.

We must take action to save especially the children and women who often fall victims to dogs bites. The anti-rabies vaccine must be made available and affordable to all in need.

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I appreciate KCCA effort towards the fight against stray dogs in the city through poisoning them. This reduces possible chances of spreading the rabies virus. However, I recently read an article in the media which indicated that many hospitals countrywide receive cases of dog bites, but they lack the vaccine for treating rabies victims.

Even the facilities that have the vaccine, sell it expensively, which some people cannot afford. A rabies vaccine costs between Shs35,000 and Shs150,000 depending on the facility. The government should ensure that more hospitals in the country get the

anti-rabies vaccine.

According to KCCA, there are about 20,000 dogs in the city and about 6,000 of these roam the streets.

In 2016 alone, at least 300 school children were bitten by stray dogs in Kampala between January and March. Rabies is a viral disease caused by dog bites. The virus causes acute inflammation of the brain and if not quickly treated, can even cause death.

My neighbour was bitten by a dog a few months ago, but when rushed to a nearby clinic, she was told to instead go to the Animal Health Research Centre in Entebbe to get the rabies vaccine. This underscores the need for the government to equip all health facilities with the rabies vaccine services.

I also call upon the government to explore the possibility of providing free vaccinations to all dogs in people's homes. However, people owning dogs should also be responsible enough and take their dogs for vaccination at designated centres across the country.

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