

Matang rabies-free in two years

District a controlled area for now but is safe to visit, says committee

IPOH: It will take about two years for the Matang sub-district to be de-gazetted as rabies infected and officially declared free of the disease, the state Health Committee said.

Its chairman Datuk Dr Mah Hang Soon, who also heads a special task force on rabies, said the state government has taken the first step by declaring Matang a "rabies-controlled area" effective today.

"People may wonder why we have not de-gazetted the area yet but we are following international standards when it comes to disease control or prevention," he told reporters at the State Secretariat yesterday.

"We are following strict procedures, so there are steps we must

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Datuk Dr Mah Hang Soon

follow. It takes about two years.

"Declaring it a rabies-controlled area is a start," he said.

On July 17, Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Dr Zambry Abd Kadir declared the Matang sub-district a rabies

infection area, as a measure to contain any potential outbreak.

The declaration was made after the authorities started vaccinating all pets within a 1km radius of where a rabid dog died after it bit two children in Kuala Sepetang, about 70km from here.

Dr Mah said the decision to begin de-gazetting Matang was made after all the 43 samples from dogs, cats and monkeys taken in the area tested negative.

He said Matang was safe to visit. "I was informed that things are returning to normal.

"There will be no more roadblocks to check dog and cat movements in the area from today onwards," he said.

Dr Mah commended the people

in the area for taking the initiative to educate themselves about rabies.

However, he urged residents to take the necessary precautions to ensure there is no recurrence.

"Vaccinate your pets, read up on issues related to diseases, and if you want to rear stray dogs or cats, make sure you license them."

Meanwhile, Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr S. Subramaniam said the rabies outbreak in Serian, Sarawak, is under control.

No new cases were reported in new localities there, he added.

"Test results on dogs in the surrounding areas also showed negative for rabies," he said, adding that it would take at least two years for the areas to be declared free of rabies.