

PUBLIC HEALTH

MASSIVE OP TO COMBAT RABIES

Sarawak govt to remove dogs from streets to stem spread of virus

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THE state government will conduct a massive operation to remove all dogs from the streets due to the alarming spread of rabies in districts affected by the virus.

Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Douglas Uggah Embas said the operation would be conducted to stop the movement of carriers of the virus from spreading to other places.

He said the state government was compelled to initiate the operation following the increase in the number of cases involving people who had been bitten by dogs in Kuching, of which figures have surpassed the number of cases in Serian, the first district to be affected by the virus.

As at Monday, 2,424 cases of people bitten by dogs have been reported in Kuching, compared with 2,233 cases in Serian, said Douglas, who is also the state Natural Disaster Management Committee chairman.

"All dogs, regardless if the animal is wearing a tag or not, roaming the streets would be captured



Sarawak Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Douglas Uggah Embas (left) at a briefing on the rabies situation at the state's Natural Disaster Management Committee's operation room in Petra Jaya yesterday. PIC BY ADIB POVERA

and placed at a temporary shelter for 48 hours to allow owners to claim their pets.

"The location of the temporary shelter would be announced by the state Veterinary Services Department soon.

"I advise pet owners to keep dogs and cats at home while we carry out the operation," he said at the committee's operations room at Wisma Bapa Malaysia here.

Present were state Veterinary Services Department acting director Dr Adrian Susin and state Health department director Dr Jamilah Hashim.

Douglas declined to elaborate

when asked if unclaimed dogs placed at the shelter would be culled.

He also announced that the state government would expand the anti-rabies buffer zone to Sibu following new cases of dogs infected by the virus reported in Julau.

The buffer zone, he said, was expanded as the new case of dogs detected with the virus was reported outside of the previous buffer zone.

"The frequency of vaccination operations in Sibu will also be increased. The state government, together with the police,

would conduct roadblocks along the Bintagor and Durin bridges to prevent the movement of dogs and cats from Sarikei into Sibu."

It was reported that SMK Julau 1 in Julau was the latest location declared as the 27th rabies-infected area in Sarawak.

Dr Adrian said the department had vaccinated 42,233 domestic animals since July last year.

"To date, our team has vaccinated 34,209 dogs, 7,979 cats and 45 other animals. The exercise is ongoing and we will increase the number of operations soon."