

Mom whose son died from dog bite leads Central Luzon anti-rabies drive

By [Ding Cervantes](#) Updated March 30, 2009 12:00 AM

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SAN FERNANDO, Pampanga, Philippines – A mother whose five-year-old son died of rabies last December has taken the lead in pushing for local laws against rabies.

This, amid proposals to include anti-rabies vaccination among those usually given to children and reports of at least 2,033 cases of animal bites in this province last year.

Nina Tomen, a writer whose five-year-old son Gian Carlo died of rabies, said rabies “is a highly misunderstood disease and there is a need to inform the public of the serious threat it poses to everyone.”

Tomen has become a leading figure of the Santungan ng Kababaihan at Kabataan sa Pampanga or Sangkap which launched over the weekend its anti-rabies website *www.rabiespoi.org*.

Sangkap also initiated last Saturday a rabies awareness forum, which revealed that Central Luzon has consistently topped the list of regions with the most number of rabies cases nationwide since six years ago.

During the forum, Dr. Mila Mananggit, a veterinarian from the Department of Agriculture (DA) regional office here, said that in the Philippines, unvaccinated dogs and cats are the most common sources of rabies infection.

She cited estimates that 300 to 600 Filipinos die of rabies every year and at least 50 percent of the victims are children aged five to 14.

Mananggit said Pampanga, Bulacan and Nueva Ecija are among the 10 provinces with the most number of animal rabies.

The Provincial Health Office (PHO) reported during the forum that 2,033 cases of animal bites, mostly of dogs, were reported in the province last year. The figure though does not include cases in Angeles City.

“The incidence rate for Pampanga last year was 27.52 per 100,000 population. In 2007, there were five reported cases of human deaths due to rabies in the province,” the PHO said.

The PHO urged the public to seek immediate post-exposure treatment after an incident or exposure to rabies.

“Unity and organized intervention are our best policies against rabies,” the forum organizers said.

The forum, the first on rabies in Pampanga, was organized by the PHO, City of San Fernando Health Office, Angeles City Veterinary Office, City Environment and Natural Resources Office of San Fernando, Pampanga Disaster Response Network Inc., Health Integrated Development Services, Pampanga Pediatric Society, Sindalan Barangay Council, Kapampangan Marangal Inc., and Couples for Christ.

During the forum, DA veterinarians advised pet owners to be responsible in having their dogs

and cats vaccinated starting three months old and giving them booster shots annually thereafter.

The Pampanga Pediatric Society has recommended the inclusion of anti-rabies vaccination as part of the regular regimen to protect children from infectious diseases like measles.

There are two-government-owned Animal Bite Treatment Centers in Pampanga – one at the Jose B. Lingad Regional Memorial Hospital in the City of San Fernando, and the other at the Diosdado Macapagal Memorial Hospital in Guagua town.

The PHO plans to put up two more centers at the San Luis District Hospital and Macabebe District Hospital.

“There are many initiatives undertaken by various groups to help eradicate rabies in the country,” said Tomen, Sangkap program officer.

“However, there is a need for us to consolidate our efforts toward an organized intervention to attack the rabies concern from all fronts – from legislation to enforcement, to massive information dissemination and treatment.”

Tomen’s group is advocating for anti-rabies legislation at the provincial and municipal levels and for organized intervention in Pampanga.

Sangkap has joined the Coalition Against Rabies Disease which was formed to make Angeles a dog-friendly city and rabies-free by 2012.