

323,000 dogs in CL get vaccines, rabies drops by over 50 percent

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CITY OF SAN FERNANDO – The Department of Agriculture (DA) noted here yesterday more than 50 percent drop in rabies cases in Central Luzon where some 323,000 dogs received anti-rabies vaccinations.

“From 68 cases tallied in 2010, the rabies cases dropped only to 32 the following year,” said Dr. Milagros Mananggit, regional rabies coordinator.

Still, Central Luzon tied with Western Visayas in the sixth slot in the list of regions with the most number of rabies cases, after Northern Mindanao with 68 cases; Calabarzon with 58; Central Visayas with 48; Ilocos Region with 45; and Bicol with 33.

In the provincial level in Central Luzon, Bulacan registered the highest number of 18 cases, followed by Pampanga and Tarlac with five each; Nueva Ecija with three; and Zambales with one. Aurora province reported no rabies case in the past six years.

Mananggit attributed the decrease to “the support of elected officials for the anti- rabies program of the government from the provincial down to the barangay levels.”

“Among the programs we have done in partnership with local government units are mass vaccination of 323,000 dogs last year, the conduct of seminars and film showings; airing of radio infomercials; distribution of leaflets and posters; dog population control by castration and spraying; re-activation of rabies prevention and control committees; passage of ordinances that prevent the spread of the infection; and rabies surveillance,” said Mananggit.

She said that “under rabies surveillance, each district veterinarian in areas with confirmed rabies cases coordinate with the provincial or city veterinary office for anti-rabies vaccination.”

Rabies is a virus transferred to humans from animals, usually dogs and cats, through close contact with the infected saliva of the animal through bites and scratches.

World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 95 percent of human deaths caused by the rabies virus occur in countries in Asia and Africa where almost half of those bitten by suspected rabid animals are children under 15 years of age.

The virus may cause a disease in the brain that can ultimately lead to the death of the infected person. Early symptoms include fever, headache and general weakness or discomfort.

As the disease progresses, more specific symptoms appear and may include insomnia, anxiety, confusion, slight or partial paralysis, excitation, hallucinations, agitation, hypersalivation or increase in production of saliva, difficulty in swallowing and hydrophobia or the fear of water.

Death usually occurs within days of the onset of these symptoms.