

No New Cases Of Rabies After July 1 - Subramaniam

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PUTRAJAYA, July 5 (Bernama) -- No new case of rabies has been reported after July 1 in the Serian district of Sarawak where two of three infected children died yesterday, Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr S. Subramaniam said today.

He said 68 cases of dog bites were reported between April 1 and July 1 in the five villages in the district that were declared rabies-infected yesterday by the Sarawak government.

A vaccination exercise was ongoing in an area of 10-km radius from the five villages and the villagers were being enlightened on rabies, its symptoms and preventive measures, he said at a press conference at the ministry here.

Subramaniam said 11 teams from the Serian Health Office and Sarawak Health Department were on the ground carrying out 'active case detection' (ACD) in 19 villages in Serian, covering 2,098 doors/houses and 6,094 people.

The minister said it was suspected that the rabies had spread from Kalimantan to the Serian district that borders Indonesia.

He said that looking at history, Malaysia had seen rabies infections in Perlis, Kedah and Penang as a result of dogs crossing over from Thailand at the common border.

"We suspect a similar possibility in Serian which has a common border with Kalimantan," he said.

Yesterday, two children, a six-year-old girl and her four-year-old brother, died from rabies at the Sarawak General Hospital. A seven-year-old girl is under treatment at the hospital.

Subramaniam said there was sufficient vaccine for people and pet dogs and cats.

He said the Sarawak Veterinary Services Department had decided to vaccinate all pet dogs and cats and eventually stray dogs and cats as well after a survey had been completed.

The Health Ministry would monitor closely all the 68 cases of dog bite that occurred since April because the incubation period for rabies was long, he said.

"We are convinced there will be no more new cases. As for those who have been bitten, we will monitor and administer vaccine," he added.

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