Zamboanga City runs out of anti-rabies vaccines

ZAMBONGA CITY: The local government here had temporarily stopped its vaccination activities in villages under Oplan Alis Rabies after it ran out of medicines for dog bites, according to the city veterinarian.

Dr. Mario Arriola said the more than 2,000 bottles of vaccine in his office, which they purchased early this year, had been entirely consumed, prompting them to halt the project.

He added that an increase in the number of pet owners having their dogs and cats immunized resulted in early depletion of the rabies medicine, even as he noted the rising number of people bitten by canines wandering the streets in Zamboanga City.

The Zamboanga City veterinarian appealed to the Department of Health central office “to share enough rabies vaccines” and requested the city treasurer to disburse funds for the purchase of rabies vaccines.

At the same time, Arriola renewed calls for rural officials in the city’s 98 barangay (villages) to intensify their stray dog-catching activities to help minimize canine bites in their communities, even as he said “the continuous advocacy on responsible pet ownership will help reduce the problem.”

Arriola’s move came in the wake of a five-year-old boy in Basilan, who was attacked two weeks ago by 10 stray dogs.

The boy died a few hours later.

Arriola said two young boys from Barangay Cawit and Barangay San Roque also died of rabies late last week.

He added that the Office of the City Veterinarian “takes care of training stray dog catchers who are authorized to take the collected animals to the city impounding area in Barangay San Roque, where they are put to sleep after three days.”

Meanwhile, in Baguio City, Mayor Benjamin Magalong has directed the City Veterinary Office to conduct an aggressive month-long campaign against stray dogs in the city’s 128 barangay to ensure that residents confine their dogs to their backyards.

Magalong also ordered the concerned department to study the possibility of significantly increasing the penalties for owners of stray dogs to prevent them from letting their dogs loiter in the streets and pose a serious threat to the public passing through places where the dogs often play and defecate.

He agreed to a request of City Veterinarian Dr. Brigit Piok to rehire job-order (JO) employees, who could be part of another team of impounders of stray dogs.

Piok said Baguio City now had only one team of impounders as the JO contracts of members of another team were expiring.

The campaign against stray dogs will start in Purok 17, Irisan and will be replicated in other villages.
Magalong also instructed the City Veterinary Office to conduct its operations at night so that all stray dogs would be impounded and for the owners to learn their lesson.

He sought the cooperation of village authorities so that Baguio City could be rid of harmful stray dogs.

Piok said the impounded dogs would be brought to the common area within the slaughterhouse compound for the owners to retrieve the animals there, adding that unclaimed dogs would be euthanized and buried in a common burial ground.

Village chiefs Arthur Carlos of Irisan and Candido Jaime of Asin assured the mayor and the city veterinary office of their support.