



JABATAN PERKHIDMATAN VETERINAR

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Protect pets from rabies

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Protect pets from rabies

IN Malaysia, rabies is predominantly found in Sarawak, mainly because of its proximity to Kalimantan, which is an endemic region.

Since July 2017, rabies has claimed 80 lives in Sarawak, including eight in 2024 alone, according to the Sarawak Health Department.

Rabies spreads through the saliva of infected animals, typically via bites, scratches or contact with mucous membranes such as the eyes, mouth or open wounds.

While dogs are the main transmitters, any mammal can carry and transmit rabies. In fact, wildlife such as bats, monkeys and wild dogs, are considered major reservoirs for rabies, which is why pets that live in high-risk areas near wildlife are particularly at risk of infection, says Vet Partners Veterinary Clinic practice director Dr Lee Ee Liang.

Rabies is a highly contagious viral infection that affects the central nervous system. It's a zoonotic disease, meaning it can spread from animals to humans, and up to 99 per cent of human rabies cases are caused by dog bites.

Once clinical symptoms appear, rabies is nearly 100 per cent fatal, not only to animals but humans as well.

While early symptoms of rabies in



Boehringer Ingelheim Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia head of business segment, companion animals Dr Evonne Lim says if your pet is bitten by a potentially rabid animal, it's crucial to seek veterinary care as soon as possible. PICTURE CREDIT: BOEHRINGER INGELHEIM

pets and humans can be similar such as fever and headache, these can quickly escalate and vary between mammalian species.

In dogs, rabies often manifests with changes in behaviour such as aggression, restlessness, irritability, excessive drooling, difficulty swallowing and even paralysis.

Infected cats, on the other hand, may also display changes in behaviour, but instead of aggression, cats

can suddenly become very quiet, withdrawn and skittish.

Dr Lee says symptoms of rabies can vary widely between species, and this can pose a danger to humans as pet owners may not be aware that their animals have been infected by the virus.

While 99 per cent of human rabies cases are linked to dog bites, any mammal can carry and transmit the virus, says Boehringer Ingelheim Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia head of business segment, companion animals Dr Evonne Lim.

Not only pets, but domesticated livestock, such as cows, horses, goats, sheep and pigs that live in rural areas or regions close to wildlife, are at risk of carrying and spreading rabies.

That's why it is important to raise awareness about rabies and emphasise the importance of early and regular vaccination in protecting pets, people and communities from this deadly disease," says Dr Lim.

Dr Lee adds that once the infection progresses, symptoms can include severe neurological complications such as confusion, hallucinations, hydrophobia (fear of drinking water) and seizures.

This is why vaccinating household pets is a crucial preventive measure, as it does not only protect your pet's health, but also ensures that the pet owner and his family members are safe.

ACT FAST

If your pet is bitten by a potentially rabid animal, it's crucial to seek veterinary

Symptoms of rabies can vary widely between species, and this can pose a danger to humans as pet owners may not be aware that their animals have been infected by the virus.

Dr Lee Ee Liang

care as soon as possible, says Dr Lim. Early assessment allows your vet to provide prompt treatment, which is essential in preventing the disease from progressing to deadly late-stage disease.

For unvaccinated pets, treatment usually includes an injection of anti-rabies serum (also known as rabies immunoglobulin or RIG) in combination with the rabies vaccine. If your pet has already been vaccinated against rabies, immediate veterinary attention is still necessary, as your vet may administer a booster shot to ensure continued protection and prevent any risk of disease progression.

Similarly, if you or a family member is bitten by an animal suspected of having rabies, seek medical attention

immediately. Early medical intervention is crucial and, like in pets, offers nearly 100 per cent efficacy in preventing active rabies," says Dr Lee.

He adds that vaccination against rabies isn't mandatory across Peninsular Malaysia due to the low incidence of the disease, however, it is compulsory to vaccinate dogs which live about 50km to 80km from the Thai border to create an "immune belt".

Vaccinating at least 70 per cent of the local pet population can establish herd immunity and reduce the risk of outbreaks, he says.

"Even if pets are kept indoors, they may sometimes escape and come into contact with infected animals. I would strongly encourage all pet owners, regardless of whether they live in the city or the outskirts, to vaccinate their pets against rabies."

Just like human vaccines, most vaccines produce minor side effects, including temporary decrease in appetite, lethargy and, in some cases, vomiting or diarrhoea.

Most of the time, the side effects are very mild and temporary, and much less dangerous than the actual disease, says Dr Lee.

Pet owners are usually reluctant to vaccinate their pets according to the recommended schedule because they may be concerned about side effects or the cost of vaccination.

However, it's important to be aware that vaccinating pets not only protects the pet but also the pet owner, his family members and other pets from a potentially deadly disease.

by meera@nst.com.my



Vaccinating pets not only protects them but also the pet owners, family members and other pets. PICTURE CREDIT: BOEHRINGER INGELHEIM



Vet Partners Veterinary Clinic practice director Dr Lee Ee Liang says pets that live near wildlife in high-risk areas are particularly at risk of infection. PICTURE CREDIT: DR LEE EE LIANG

Tujuh Individu sudah disaman

MEDIA	RUANGAN	MUKA SURAT	TARIKH
Harian Metro	Lokal	13	13 Mei

BURUNG MERPATI BAWA PENYAKIT

Tujuh individu sudah disaman

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Serius menangani masalah bawaan burung merpati di bandar raya ini menyebabkan Majlis Bandaraya Pulau Pinang (MBPP) menguatkuasakan larangan memberi makanan kepada burung itu sejak tahun lalu dan mengambil tindakan tegas bermula awal tahun ini.

Tindakan diambil mengikut Seksyen 47(1) Akta Jalan, Parit dan Bangunan 1974 yang memperuntukkan kompaun RM250 selain kesalahan ingkar atau gagal membayar kompaun boleh dihadapkan ke mahkamah.

Ahli Majlis MBPP yang juga Pengerusi Jawatankuasa Kecil Kesihatan Persekitaran, Lee Seng Hwai berkata, sejak kompaun dikuatkuasakan pada Mac lalu, sebanyak tujuh notis dikeluarkan ke atas individu yang bersalah iaitu dua pada Mac dan lima pada April lalu.

Katanya, MBPP juga mengesan 36 lokasi panas yang menjadi tempat pemberian makanan kepada burung merpati yang mana 29 di daerah Timur Laut dan tujuh lagi di Barat Daya.



"Burung merpati bukan sahaja menyebabkan kacau ganggu, malah najisnya dan najisnya kotorkan kawasan, mengandungi bakteria, fungus dan bahan organik"

Lee Seng Hwai

"Sebanyak 637 aduan mengenai isu ini diterima pada tahun lalu dan 232 lagi pada tahun ini, yang setakat bulan Mac," katanya ketika dihubungi bagi mengulas laporan Harian Metro semalam, mengenai tindakan penduduk bandar



JALAN Penang antara lokasi panas (hotspot) pemberian makanan kepada burung merpati di George Town. - Gambar NSTP/ ZUHAINY ZULKIFFLI

raya ini memberi makanan kepada burung merpati, meskipun tertakluk penguatkuasaan undang-undang berkaitan.

Lee berkata, pihak berkuasa tempatan mengambil tindakan lembut terlebih dahulu sebelum mengenakan kompaun, bertujuan menyedarkan masyarakat mengenai bahaya burung merpati khususnya najisnya kepada kesihatan serta menjejaskan imej

bandar raya.

"Burung merpati bukan sahaja menyebabkan kacau ganggu, malah najisnya dan najisnya mengotorkan kawasan, mengandungi bakteria, fungus dan bahan organik.

"Apabila kering, ia menghasilkan debu yang akan terapung jika terdapat pergerakan di udara dan memasuki dalam sistem pernafasan.

"Kemungkinan seterusnya akan menjangkiti paru-paru serta sistem saraf manusia dan semua ini tidak dapat dilihat dengan mata kasar," katanya yang memaklumkan antara penyakit berjangkit berkaitan najis burung adalah jangkitan Histoplasmosis dan Cryptococcosis.

Menurutnya, pembiakan burung merpati yang cepat juga boleh menyebabkan risiko lain sekiranya tidak dikawal.

Beliau berkata, kebanyakan penduduk maklum mengenai larangan pemberian makanan kepada burung merpati, namun alasan tidak mahu membazirkan sisa makanan menyebabkan mereka terus memberi makan kepada burung berkenaan.

"Selain itu, alasan mereka adalah memberi makanan kepada haiwan akan mendapat balasan yang baik," katanya.

TERIMA KASIH

DISEDIAKAN OLEH:

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