

By Wilson Asiimwe

Shortage of rabies vaccines hits Buliisa

A severe shortage of anti-rabies vaccines has hit government health facilities in Buliisa district at a time when cases of attacks by suspected rabid foxes continue to rise, leaving residents living in fear.

A survey conducted across the district revealed that many health centres have run out of rabies vaccines, forcing several victims to remain at home or seek treatment from traditional healers due to a lack of medical alternatives.

Dr Robert Mugabe, the Buliisa health educator, said the district was facing increasing cases of animal attacks, yet health facilities had no vaccines to manage the situation.

Mugabe explained that by last week, at least 13 people had been bitten by suspected rabid foxes, while one person had succumbed to the injuries and infection.

"We don't have any anti-rabies vaccine in our health facilities. We have been referring victims to Hoima

Regional Referral Hospital, but we are told they have also run out of stock. We are now relying on Kinyara Sugar Factory Health Centre, which is helping us," Mugabe said.

He added that apart from attacking people, the foxes have also killed livestock in different villages, especially during the night.

"As a district, we are carrying out sensitisation campaigns and asking our people to avoid moving at night because the situation is getting out of control," Mugabe said.

According to Mugabe, the district veterinary department has already alerted the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) about the increasing danger posed by stray and wild animals.

He said the district was requesting UWA to conduct a large-scale operation aimed at eliminating stray animals that have become a threat to communities.

One of the residents, Wilfred Kiiza, said foxes are common in forests



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bordering the Murchison Falls National Park and warned locals to be careful, especially during the night.

Kiiza advised residents against venturing deep into forests to collect

firewood because of the growing risk of attacks by stray animals suspected to be infected with rabies.

"We are now living in fear because these foxes are moving closer to villages and gardens," Kiiza said.

Ann Kabugo, a resident of Butaiba, narrated how his mother was attacked by foxes while returning from the garden last Thursday.

"We are now afraid to go to the gardens because of the foxes. Last week, my mother was attacked by two foxes and she is currently admitted at Buliisa General Hospital," Kabugo said.

The Buliisa communication officer, Hannington Tibaijuka, said all the reported cases had been recorded within only two weeks, indicating a worrying increase in attacks.

The deceased was identified as Josephine Akello, 31, a resident of Uribo village in Ngwedo sub-county.

According to district officials, Akello died on May 13, shortly after being

discharged from Buliisa General Hospital, where she had been admitted alongside other bite victims who later responded positively to treatment.

Tibaijuka urged residents to avoid interacting with foxes, stray dogs and unfamiliar animals because they could easily spread rabies.

"The most affected areas are Ngedo, Biiso and Butyaba sub-counties. Almost every day we receive a new case and we are appealing to our people to avoid contact with foxes," Tibaijuka said.

He added that the district veterinary department had launched investigations into the suspected rabies outbreak and intensified surveillance operations to identify the source of the infections and stop further spread.

Authorities are also conducting community-sensitisation campaigns to encourage residents to report animal bites early and seek immediate medical attention.

Rabies is a viral disease transmitted to humans through saliva from infected mammals, mainly through bites and scratches.