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Morning after dog bit two residents to death

AUGUST 26, 2014 BY FOLASHADE ADEBAYO

3 Comments (<http://www.punchng.com/feature/lagos-pulse/morning-after-dog-bit-two-residents-to-death/#comments>)**Racheal Daudu and Makwa**

Folashade Adebayo writes that the death of two residents from complications arising from infection with rabies brings attention to responsibilities and obligations attached to pet ownership

The news that a young boy died from dog bite three years after his father also died from a similar cause would make many people curious. But this is the tragic story that has unsettled Mologede Estate, an unplanned but tranquil neighbourhood in the Meiran area of Lagos.

James Musa, a boisterous 13-year-old had relocated to Lagos from Abuja, after a rabid dog fatally bit his father in the Federal Capital Territory. On the often deserted inner roads in the estate, Musa and his teenage friends played football. They would shoot the ball into any neighbouring house where residents would scream at them to get them right back on the streets.

With three deaths in a spate of one month, even a Nollywood tragedy script cannot be grimmer. During a visit to the estate on Friday, our correspondent learnt, however, that Musa might still be alive if he had told his aunt and her husband of the real cause of the scratch just below his right eye. But he did not.

It was also learnt that the cycle of deaths did not start with Musa. Jerry, a huge Alsatian dog owned by the Ogundiran family living in the estate, allegedly caused the string of deaths, which by now has Musa, Jerry and Aishat Opakunle, a 21-year-old National Diploma graduate on its list. Jerry's owner, identified simply as Mr. Ogundiran, and his family had allegedly fled the community since news of the first death broke.

A community of amorphous cottage houses, Mologede Estate is home to a cluster of middle class families whose buildings are mostly modest, unpainted and without a fence. The Opakunle's house on No. 114A is just beside No 115A where Jerry lived with the Ogundiran family. Both houses are without a fence and so it was not unusual for the dog to move into the next compound. Neighbour's accounts had it that the dog was a frequent sight on the road and in Opakunle's shop where Aishat usually fed him with crumbs of food.

Things went awry last month when Musa allegedly touched the dog while playing with friends in No. 113A. Jerry was said to have jumped on him, mauling the boy just under his right eye. Unknown to its owners and neighbours, the Alsatian was not done with its deadly mission. Without provocation, it bit Aishat on her right palm on the night of the same day it attacked Musa.

Narrating the incident to our correspondent, Musa's aunt, Mrs. Racheal Daudu, expressed sadness at the turn of events. According to her, Musa was a promising child who just passed his Junior School Certificate Examination. She blamed the wife of the dog's owner for not disclosing to neighbours that it had rabies.

"It was a very sad incident. Musa did not tell us that a dog bit him. He said he fell and we believed him. It was only after Aishat died that he told us that the dog that bit the aunty that died also bit him. The whole thing happened in July. Musa did not confess until Aishat died one month after. Then he complained of headache and fever and we gave him some drugs. That was the Tuesday that followed the Friday on which Aishat died. He even went out to play football that same day.

"But when I came back, I met him lying down. Up till the time he died, he kept saying it was the woman (Mrs. Ogundiran) that misled him. We rushed him to the hospital, but it was too late. He started saying nonsense. He would have been 14 years-old next month. He was my sister's son. He came to live with us three years ago after his father also died from dog bite," she recalled.

While the Daudus appeared to be slowly taken the tragedy in their stride by talking to the press, the Opakunles on the other hand are still numb with grief. When our correspondent knocked on their door, a middle-aged woman suspected to be Aishat's mother was eager to go back to her closet.

"We don't have anything to say on the matter. The story is true but we don't have anything to say," she said in Yoruba.

Neighbours were less hesitant however. One of them, a young lady who claimed to be Aishat's friend spoke, on condition of anonymity, about Aishat's dreams. She said that having completed her National Diploma programme, the deceased was in the process of registering as a Computer Engineering student at the Moshood Abiola Polytechnic, Abeokuta, Ogun State.

"She was a very nice and outspoken person. I don't believe she did not tell anybody that a dog bit her because she was an adult. In fact, she was first taken to a nurse who came to ask the woman (Mrs. Ogundiran) if Jerry had rabies and she said no, that the dog just came back from the hospital after receiving vaccination.

"Everyone in the neighbourhood believed her. We did not know that the dog died from rabies five days after it bit Musa and Aishat. Yet, she did not disclose this. By the time we all got to know that the dog had rabies and had died, Aishat had started manifesting the symptoms. She fell ill on Wednesday and by Thursday she was already barking and never allowed treatment," she narrated in a voice soaked with sadness.

Observations from Aishat's friend are consistent with expert's view on the symptoms of rabies. According to the Chairman, Nigerian Veterinary Medical Association, Lagos State Chapter, Dr. Alao Mobolaji, rabies is a fatal disease that should be treated within hours of infection. Mobolaji, who was contacted by the management of the hospital where Musa died,



(<http://www.punchng.com/feature/lagos-pulse/morning-after-dog-bit-two-residents-to-death/attachment/the-ogundirans-house/>)

The Ogundiran's house

animal registry and a tagging system as a precondition for pet ownership in the state.

He further explained that an annual anti-rabies vaccination is compulsory for dogs, adding that Jerry could have been infected by other dogs, chimpanzees and bats in the area.

"We asked Musa's uncle if there are bats in the areas and he said yes, that he had once sighted a dead bat in his compound. The area may be a migratory route for bats. This is one of the reasons why we are saying let us have an animal registry in the state. Even if a dog gets lost, it will be easier to reunite the dog with its owner through the tagging system," he asserted.

Calls to the Special Adviser on Public Health to Governor Babatunde Fashola, Dr. Yewande Adeshina, were not picked. Messages to her line were also not replied as at 8pm press time. However, findings by our correspondent showed that in 2013, six Nigerian scientists did a study to determine the prevalence of rabies antigen in the brain of dogs slaughtered for consumption and those that died in veterinary clinics in Lagos.

The study, published in the United States National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health, was jointly conducted by Hambolu SE, Dzikwi AA, Kwaga JK, Kazeem HM, Umoh JU and Hambolu DA. About 196 dog bites and suspected rabies cases were observed between January 2006 and December 2011.

"The result of this study indicates that rabies antigen is present among dogs slaughtered in Lagos State and may pose a threat to public health. Although available records show that provocation of dogs was the major cause of dog bites and both adults and children fall victim of dog bites. There was a poor record keeping practice in the veterinary clinics across the state," the study stated.

expressed regrets about the incident.

"I was with him (Musa) the day before he died and he even spoke with me. Children are the most vulnerable when it comes to rabies and it is a highly preventable infection. From the animal angle, there are vaccines to prevent it and also from the human angle there are also relevant vaccines. Once you know there is a dog bite, you have to be given prophylactic treatment immediately. But once a person starts to show the symptoms, there is little or nothing anybody can do once the virus has got into the nervous system. That is why you observe hallucinations, while the person starts to bark like a dog and the patient will also be afraid of water. The sight of water will set the patient on edge," he explained.

Mobolaji said the hospital exhumed the dog's corpse for medical examination. "We are through with the first phase and we are waiting for the confirmatory result showing that the dog, indeed, had rabies," he added.

The animal doctor also expressed concerns about the indiscriminate rate of dog ownership without a commensurate monitoring efforts from government.

He called on relevant authorities to establish an

Meanwhile the Ogundiran family has vanished from the Estate. Silence greeted our correspondent when she visited their apartment. A look around the compound however showed an abandoned sign post indicating Mr. Ogundiran as a bore hole specialist. He picked his calls when our correspondent called the line embossed on the signpost and his apartment.

“Normally, I don’t speak to journalists but I have to in this matter. Nobody knew the dog had rabies because it was not manifesting any symptoms. We were not even aware that the dog bit the boy. We only knew that it bit Aishat around 9 pm. It was even its claws and we treated the wound that night. It is most unfortunate that this had to happen,” he said.

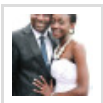
That was the view of the Principal, Royal Decency Comprehensive High School in the Estate, Mr. Sunday Ogundeji. Ogundeji described the Ogundiran family in glowing terms. He however, said the tragedy might have been preventable if they had a fence.

“From the little I know about the family, they are very nice. Assuming they had a fence, this probably would not have happened. Probably the dog was hungry. We were not around when it happened. The school was already on break. But we had to pay our condolences. Only God knows why this happened. That dog had been in this area for two, three years now. Sometimes, you see it lying on the road. I think we are safe now. The dog is dead, we are not anticipating a recurrence when school resumes,” he reasoned. **Copyright PUNCH.** All rights reserved. This material, and other digital content on this website, may not be reproduced, published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed in whole or in part without prior express written permission from PUNCH.

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