

Philippine city offers bounties for dead rats

August 6 2014

A Philippine city is offering bounties for dead rats in an effort to prevent a repeat of a deadly epidemic spread by rodent urine, an official said Wednesday.

Olongapo [city](#) residents are being paid 10 pesos (23 US cents) for each adult rat captured and killed, and five pesos for juveniles, to battle the bacterial [disease leptospirosis](#), city health administrator Jaime Alcano said.

Olongapo mayor Rolan Paulino came up with the idea for the anti-rodent campaign, which Alcano said has no known precedents in the Philippines, as a public relations exercise to educate people about the disease.

Residents have only swapped 44 dead rats for cash since the month-long campaign began last week, Alcano said, but he insisted the headlines generated by the bounties are more important than how many rodents are killed.

"The success of our campaign does not rest solely on the number of [rats](#) captured. This is just part of our awareness campaign against the disease," he told AFP.

Leptospirosis is an infectious bacterial disease that lives in animal urine and is often transmitted during annual flooding that plagues many parts of the Philippines.

People catch it by walking in floods or having infected water touch cuts on their skin.

In mild cases it causes flu-like symptoms, but in its most severe form, known as Weil's disease, it can cause organ failure and massive internal bleeding.

Between five and 30 percent of infected people die, according to the World Health Organization.

Olongapo, a city of about 200,000 people two hours' drive northwest of Manila, was swamped by floods in September last year that triggered a leptospirosis epidemic.

More than 300 residents were infected over the following month, killing 10, Alcano said.

Alcano said all Olongapo teachers are to undergo seminars on how avoid catching the disease, so they can pass the information on to their students.

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