Norwegian woman dies of rabies after rescuing Filipino puppy

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A 24 year-old Norwegian woman died this week of rabies, after she was bitten by a puppy she rescued while on vacation in the Philippines, her family announced.

In February, while on holiday with friends, Birgitte Kallestad found a "helpless" puppy on the side of the road during a scooter ride.

"Birgitte put the puppy in a basket and brought him home. She cleaned it and cared for it and to her joy it started healing. They played with the puppy in the garden" of the resort where they were staying, the family said in a statement published Thursday evening.

"After a while the puppy started trying to bite them like puppies do. It nipped their fingers when they were playing," the statement continued.

The [young woman](#), a hospital employee, started feeling ill after her return to Norway and was put into [intensive care](#) at Forde hospital, where she worked and where she passed away on Monday evening.

According to the Norwegian Institute of Public Health, the last recorded case of rabies contracted by a human in mainland Norway dates back to 1815, and to 1826 for an animal.

According to the family no one in the group of friends had been vaccinated against rabies.

"Our dear Birgitte loved animals. Our fear is that this will happen to others who have a warm heart like hers," her family said.

At least 59,000 people worldwide die each year worldwide from the animal-borne disease, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

More than 99 percent of victims are concentrated in Asia, Africa and South America.

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