



## News

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### **An imported case of canine rabies in a quarantine centre in London: immediate public health management of the incident, April 2008**

The HPA has successfully traced those known to have been exposed to a 10 week old puppy that died of rabies in quarantine in London at the end of April, and arranged post-exposure prophylaxis where appropriate.

On 25 April 2008, rabies was diagnosed in a 10 week old puppy which had died in a quarantine centre in London earlier that day. The puppy was one of five stray dogs that had been imported to the United Kingdom from Sri Lanka by an animal charity on 17 April 2008. On arrival at Heathrow Airport, the puppies spent one night at the Animal Reception Centre before being transferred to Chingford Quarantine Kennels in north east London the following day. The puppies were unwell on arrival at the kennels and were housed in an isolation unit until the death of the rabid puppy on the morning of 25 April 2008. Initial brain samples were strongly positive for rabies by the fluorescent antibody test (FAT) indicating a very high viral load. Subsequently the virus was confirmed by PCR and tissue culture to be a wild-type strain of classical rabies virus genotype 1. The Health Protection Agency (HPA) was informed of the diagnosis by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) on the evening of 25 April 2008.

#### **Public health actions**

On the evening of 25 April 2008 the HPA initiated an investigation to identify all those who had had contact with the puppy from its retrieval from the streets in Sri Lanka on 12 April 2008 until its death on 25 April 2008. Information was obtained from Defra on the complete sequence of events around the importation, transport and quarantining of the animal, and information on potential human contacts, from the following:

- members of the animal rescue charity (details of those in contact with the puppy in Sri Lanka until boarding the plane),
- management at the Heathrow Animal Reception Centre (ARC) (details of persons in contact with the puppy during transfer from the plane to and during its stay at the ARC),
- management at the kennels (details of those in contact with the puppy during transfer from the ARC to the quarantine kennels and during its stay at the kennels).

In addition, there was ongoing communication between the HPA and Defra to ensure that the HPA was made aware of any other possible human contacts of the puppy.

On the basis of the information obtained, 42 people were assessed, using a specially developed risk assessment algorithm, to ascertain their degree of contact with the animal, their previous rabies immunisation status and their need for rabies post-exposure prophylaxis.

Twelve people were found to have had direct physical contact with the puppy and/or its body fluids during the relevant time period: one vet who took blood from the puppy in Sri Lanka, four members of the charity that imported the puppy, one baggage handler at the airport, and six







