

January 25, 2008

Update on Toronto rabies investigation

Toronto Public Health is continuing its investigation of rabies in dogs sold at a Toronto flea market. To date, no human cases of rabies have been reported.

Anyone who touched or purchased puppies at Booth # 1513 at Dr. Flea's Flea Market since January 5 should call their local public health unit as soon as possible. One of the puppies sold at the flea market tested positive for rabies, and may have come in contact with other puppies sold at this booth.

Toronto residents should call 416-338-7600. Staff will be available until 10:00 p.m. tonight and from 8:30 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Health unit staff will assess the risk of exposure to rabies. If vaccination is required, it must be taken as soon as possible.

The flea market booth has a sign with the name "Puppies R Us." The vendor has also given out business cards with the name "Feed Me More Pets" and a business location of Chesley, Ontario. Anyone who has purchased puppies from this business at any location since January 3 should contact their local public health unit.

This vendor has been issued an order by the Medical Officer of Health in the Grey Bruce Health Unit and cannot sell any puppies until further notice.

Toronto Public Health has located 11 puppies purchased from the flea market, and all 11 will be quarantined for ten days. At this time, none of the puppies is showing signs of rabies.

"Quarantine is the best way to protect the families and individuals who purchased these dogs," said Dr. Rosana Pellizarri, Associate Medical Officer of Health. "If the dogs show symptoms within the next ten days, we will know that they were infectious while they were with the families, and any family member who hasn't already been vaccinated, will require vaccination."

If the dogs do not show symptoms during this ten-day period, it is highly unlikely that the families are at any risk from rabies.

Toronto Public Health has received more than 500 calls from the public about this investigation. To date, vaccination has been recommended for 20 individuals.

The rabies virus is found in the saliva of a rabid animal for up to ten days before the onset of symptoms, and can be spread through a bite, cut or scratch, or if the saliva comes in contact with the mouth, nose or eyes. Rabies is rare in Ontario, and, if left untreated, is usually fatal for humans and animals.

Toronto Public Health is reminding the public to purchase or adopt animals from reputable sources and always ensure that the mother of the puppies has been vaccinated. It is also important that all pets have up-to-date rabies vaccinations.

For more information, visit www.toronto.ca/health.

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