NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF

HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE

Mary Bassett, MD, MPH *Commissioner*

# 2014 Veterinary Alert # 2:
# Imported Dogs with Questionable Documentation

*May 29, 2014*

- **Dogs are being imported into the US from rabies endemic countries**
- **The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has received questionable documentation of prior rabies vaccination for many of these dogs**
- **Veterinarians should recommend rabies vaccination of imported dogs if;**
  - **the original certificate is not available**
  - **the certificate is of an unknown source**
  - **the reported age or description does match the physical appearance of the dog**
- **Please share the attached alert from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) with your colleagues in Veterinary Medicine and your staff**

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**Relevant Websites:**

**CDC --** Animal Importation information http://www.cdc.gov/animalimportation/
Rabies-Free Countries list http://www.cdc.gov/animalimportation/rabies-free-countries.html
Confinement Agreement http://www.cdc.gov/animalimportation/pdf/dog-import.pdf
Compendium of Animal Rabies Prevention and Control http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/rr/rr6006.pdf
Healthy Pets Healthy People http://www.cdc.gov/Features/HealthyPets/]

**State -- http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/zoonoses/rabies/**

**Local -- http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/diseases/cdrab.shtml**

# CDC HEALTH ALERT

## Imported Dogs with Questionable Documentation

**May 27, 2014**

**The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has received reports of an increasing number of dogs with questionable documentation of prior rabies vaccination. The dogs are being imported into the United States from rabies-endemic countries.**

**Imported dogs**

- are sold on-line, by independent sellers, or in pet stores.
- are adopted through both U.S. and international sources.
- may be purebred, hybrid, or mixed breeds; distributors may claim to have or may even provide breed registration papers.
- may be incorrectly identified as having been born and raised in the United States.

**Background:**

CDC has learned of several instances when importers have provided inaccurate rabies vaccine certificates for puppies arriving into the United States. These documents state that the puppies are older than 4 months of age and fully immunized against rabies. However, upon examination, these animals were found to be less than 4 months old and sometimes as young as 4-8 weeks of age. Documentation has also included falsification of birth location and breed registration.

Federal regulations require that dogs coming from rabies-endemic countries be fully immunized against rabies [i.e., puppies at least 3 months of age must receive the initial rabies vaccination at least 30 days prior to U.S. arrival, and adult dogs (i.e., ≥15 months old) should be current on rabies booster vaccination]. Dogs that are not fully immunized and are coming from rabies-endemic countries may be allowed entry into the United States, at the discretion of CDC, if the importer signs a confinement agreement. This agreement requires the importer to confine the dogs at a specified location until they can be vaccinated against rabies and for 30 days thereafter. Adult dogs with a history of previous rabies vaccination (i.e., expired vaccination) may be released from confinement immediately after revaccination.

**Recommendations:**

CDC recommends that veterinarians request the original rabies vaccination certificates (and English translations, if necessary) for any new patients. Veterinarians should strongly recommend that a dog be vaccinated against rabies by their clinic if:

- the client is unable to provide the original certificate;
- the certificate comes from an unknown source; or
- the reported age does not match the physical appearance of the puppy.

**Requested Actions:**

Please direct any questions about rabies vaccine or health certificates to the local animal control agency. Clients may also be referred to the CDC website or the websites below for any questions regarding zoonotic disease risks, animal importation requirements, and traveling with pets.