

Rabid Dog From Iraq Prompts Health Warning

A mixed-breed dog imported from Iraq had to be euthanized after it was found to have rabies.

Posted: October 9, 2008, 5 a.m. EDT

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued a national public health warning against rabies after a rabid dog was shipped from Iraq into the United States.

The 11-month-old mixed-breed dog was among a shipment of 24 dogs and two cats that arrived at Newark Liberty International Airport in New Jersey from Iraq in June as part of an international animal rescue operation, according to CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, published Oct. 3. The goal of the operation was to reunite servicemen returning to the United States with animals they had adopted in Iraq.

According to the report, the dog became ill on June 8, three days after arrival, and was taken to the veterinarian the following day. It was hospitalized with fever, diarrhea, wobbly gait, agitation, and crying. The dog's condition deteriorated and it was later euthanized on June 11. Specimen testing confirmed rabies on June 18.

The other pets, who had been shipped to 16 states (California, Colorado, Connecticut, Iowa, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia, and Washington), have all been accounted for and are being held for six months in quarantine.

At press time, no clinical signs consistent with rabies had been reported.

These findings underscore the need for vigilance regarding rabies during animal importation, the CDC said in its report. It also highlights the need for public education about rabies incidence in other countries.

The CDC advises that travelers should not pet stray animals in areas that are endemic for rabies, such as Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and parts of Latin America.

In addition, travelers should not adopt stray animals without acquiring a veterinarian's health assessment and ensuring proper animal vaccination for importation.

Travelers also should consider their potential for rabies exposure from animals, understand proper wound management, and promptly report animal bites to healthcare providers, according to CDC.