



Binational Border Health Information System ~

Sistema Binacional Fronterizo de Información en Salud

# Chihuahua - New Mexico - Texas

DATE / FECHA July 2, 2002

REFERENCE / REFERENCIA: 2002-001

FROM / DE: Dr. Jorge C. Magaña, EPCCHED Director

To / PARA:

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NEW REPORT / REPORTE NUEVO

FOLLOW-UP / SEGUIMIENTO: BEC-2001-003

SUSPECTED / SOSPECHOSO

CONFIRMED / CONFIRMADO

## RABIES ALERT ISSUED BY EL PASO VETERINARIANS

On June 16, 2002 a ten-week old puppy was taken to the El Paso Animal Emergency Center (Center) for treatment. He was showing distemper-like symptoms, similar to Rabies, when it was taken to the animal clinic. The ill puppy was brought to El Paso by a couple from a ranch called "Rancho El Barrial" in the Villa Ahumada, Chihuahua area. The ill canine was allegedly smuggled across the U.S. Mexico Border at El Paso. The canine was euthanized and submitted to El Paso Animal Regulation and Disease Control (ARDC) officials for laboratory testing the next day.

The El Paso City County Health & Environmental District Laboratory notified ARDC and the Center that the canine was positive for Rabies. Efforts were made to immediately locate the couple, being that they reside in McAllen, TX. As per owner's statement, the puppy had been in a fight with a skunk a few weeks prior to becoming ill. The couple is now being treated at Thomason General Hospital for exposure to Rabies.

The Juarez Animal Control, Chihuahua Health Authorities, U.S. Customs and McAllen Health Department were immediately notified. Dr. Moreno from Chihuahua Animal Control and Dr. Bernese from Cd. Juarez stated they would survey the area around the property in Villa Ahumada. All unvaccinated canines identified will be inoculated against Rabies. The female canine and two other puppies living on the property were not currently vaccinated. As per Dr. Moreno, they will be picked up and tested for Rabies by the Chihuahua Animal Control.

El Paso, McAllen, Ciudad Juarez and Chihuahua officials will continue to monitor the case, which is considered to be an imported case for El Paso. According to ARDC officials, there have been no other reported cases of canine rabies in El Paso, Juarez or Chihuahua this year and it is the first domestic animal case in El Paso in the past twenty years.

Dr. Guy Johnsen, previous President of the Texas Veterinary Medical Association and Board Member of the EPCCHED, commented: "It is not only a pet issue but a serious public health risk. Once rabies infects a person's nervous system, death is usually imminent. Rabies is routinely a fatal disease". This should serve as a serious wake up to every pet owner. State, County, and City laws require annual rabies vaccination of dogs and cats.

ANIMAL RABIES SIGNS INCLUDE: Sudden behavior change - friendly animal may attack, or mean or distant animals may become affectionate. Animal cannot drink nor swallow or appears to have something stuck in the throat. Animal may be restless and wander aimlessly or attack inanimate objects. Animal has an unexplained paralysis. Animal may display abnormal behavior (skunk walks up the street in the middle of the day).

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Reference Keys / Claves de Referencia: Doña Ana=DA; Luna County=LU; Santa Fe=SF; El Paso =EP; Austin=AU; CDC=US  
Ciudad Juárez=CJ; Nuevo Casas Grandes=CG; Ojinaga=OJ; Chihuahua=CH; México City=MX; Border Epidemiology Center=BEC

PEOPLE RABIES SYMPTOMS INCLUDE: anxiety, pain at site where bitten, hyperactivity, hypersensitivity, paralysis, inability to swallow (fear of water) and biting/screaming mixed with calmness.