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Bulletin No. 14
August 3, 1979

RABIES

The following recommendations are only a guide. They should be used in conjunction with knowledge of the animal species involved (in Alaska direct or indirect exposure to arctic or red fox is considered high risk), circumstance of the bite (bites or other head wounds are considered high-risk and unprovoked attacks more likely mean the animal is rabid - bites during attempts to aid injured animals are considered provoked), and presence of rabies in the region (the Alaska Peninsula, Southwest coastal Alaska, and the North Slope are high-risk areas due to enzootic fox rabies; generally Anchorage and the Kenai Peninsula are considered “rabies-free” areas).

POST-EXPOSURE ANTI-RABIES TREATMENT AND ANIMAL HANDLING GUIDE

(Adapted from “Recommendations of Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices,” June, 1972.)

| Animal | Condition at Time of Attach | Treatment | | |
|-------------------------------|---|-------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| | | Bite | NonBite* | Handling** |
| Wild Skunk, Fox, Bat | Regard as rabid | HRIG+DEV ¹ | HRIG+DEV ¹ | Submit head |
| Raccoon | Healthy (Vaccinated/Unvaccinated) | None ² | None ² | Quarantine 10 days |
| Domestic Dog/Cat | Escaped or Stray (Unk Vacc Status) | HRIG+DEV ^{1,3} | DEV ^{1,3} | Submit head |
| | Unexplained altered behavior or paralysis | HRIG+DEV ¹ | HRIG+DEV ¹ | Submit head |

Other (Rodents, etc.): Consider individually - See #4 below and/or consult Epidemiologist, Division of Public Health

* Scratches, lacerations, or open wounds contaminated with saliva.

** Call Local Animal Control Office or Sanitarian. Anchorage Animal Control: Phone 279-0578

1. Hyperimmune Rabies Immune Globulin (HRIG) and Duck Embryo Vaccine (DEV) are provided without cost by the Division of Public Health. Current recommended treatment regimens are provided with these biologicals at the time of need. HRIG and DEV should be discontinued if brain tissue is negative to rabies fluorescent antibody testing.
2. Begin HRIG + DEV at first sign of rabies in animal.
3. It is this category where decisions to treat or not are difficult and require a thorough attempt to gather all available knowledge about the animal involved, the circumstances of exposure, the vaccination status, and the presence of rabies in the region. For example, an individual with a non-head bite exposure in Anchorage (a “rabies-free” area) due to an escaped dog but one known to have not been out of Anchorage for the prior several weeks can be safely untreated. However, an individual with the most minor exposure to a dog known to have been bitten by a fox on the Alaska Peninsula should be treated until the dog's brain tissue is found to be uninfected. Treatment decisions in this category are perhaps best made following consultation with the medical epidemiologist in Anchorage.

4. Most often this involves rabbits, squirrels, mice, hamsters, rats, gerbils, chipmunks, and other rodents. **There has never been a case of human rabies in the U.S. traced to a rodent despite an estimated 24,000 human rodent bites annually.** Because of this and to be consistent with the recommendations of the CDC and the ACIP (MMWR Vol. 25, No. 51, December 31, 1976) the State Virology-Rabies Unit decided in 1978 to no longer accept rodents for rabies testing. Serious concerns regarding rabies in rodents or other animals not mentioned should be directed to the medical epidemiologist in Anchorage.

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