



NEWS RELEASE



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LA Animal Services Warns Angeleno Dog Owners of Canine Distemper Outbreak

Los Angeles – LA Animal Services is warning Valley residents to make sure their pets are vaccinated against distemper after a deadly outbreak was discovered in gray foxes. The disease could infect unvaccinated pet dogs.

Signs of the disease first appeared in July and since then have been found in Sierra Madre and La Canada Flintridge, with suspected cases also discovered in Arcadia, Pasadena, Glendale and, most recently, Tujunga.

Pet owners are urged to empty food and water dishes at night to prevent the disease from spreading from contaminated foxes to their pets. Owners also are advised to keep their dogs inside at night to keep them from coming into contact with infected animals.

Canine distemper is an infectious viral disease that results in loss of appetite, discharge from the eyes and nose, vomiting, fever, lethargy, partial paralysis and death. Puppies six months and younger are particularly susceptible and should be vaccinated.

The virus spreads through the air, through contact with infected bodily fluids and via food and water. So far, there have been no reports of a pet dog catching distemper from an infected fox, officials said. "The best prevention is a distemper vaccination", said Dr. Steven Feldman, Chief Veterinarian with LA Animal Control.

At least 20 suspected cases of the disease have been discovered in wild animals, mostly in gray foxes but also in raccoons. "We urge pet owners to get shots. The disease can spread from wild animals to domestic animals, and from domestic animals to the wild," said Feldman.

Distemper is always present among wildlife, but every so often an outbreak occurs in the wild. That's when the potential for it spreading to domestic dogs increases. In 2004, an urban outbreak of the disease killed several dogs, both pets and strays, in the South Central Los Angeles area. State law requires dogs to be vaccinated against rabies, but vaccinations against distemper are voluntary.

For more information or assistance call LA Animal Services at
1-888-452LA-PET1/1-888-452-7381
(TTY Hearing impaired: 877-875-8205) or visit the website at www.LAAnimalServices.com.

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