



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CASES OF RABIES AMONG DOGS IN NUNAVIK

Kuujuuaq, March 6, 2012 – The Department of Public Health (DPH) of the Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services wishes to inform the population that three cases of canine rabies have been confirmed recently in Kuujuaraapik and Kuujuuaq. The infected animals have been destroyed and the required preventive measures have been taken.

As you are probably aware, rabies is always present among the fox populations in Nunavik, and it is rare for a year to go by without confirmed cases of animal rabies in the region. However, we are currently seeing a rise in the number of cases among foxes as well as dogs. Thus, a total of nine animals (three dogs and six foxes) have been confirmed positive for rabies over the past four months in Nunavik. Caution is therefore called for when in the presence of unknown animals, whether wild or domestic.

The Nunavik DPH is on alert relative to the situation and is ensuring constant monitoring of the evolution of this health threat, in collaboration with animal-health authorities: the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), the *ministère des Ressources naturelles et de la Faune (MRNF)* and the *ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation du Québec (MAPAQ)*. “There is no treatment for rabies. The only effective procedure is the administration of the required vaccines after human exposure to the rabies virus,” mentioned Dr. Serge Déry, Nunavik Director of Public Health.

Certain simple precautions apply for preventing rabies:

- Avoid approaching, touching, petting, feeding or adopting unknown, stray or wild animals, and teach your children the same;
- Keep foxes away from houses and areas where domestic animals are kept, for example by blocking access to buildings and garbage containers;
- Have your pets (dogs and cats) vaccinated against rabies;
- Do not touch the carcass of a dead or sick animal with bare hands;
- If you touch the carcass of a dead or sick animal with bare hands, wash your hands with soap and water immediately after the contact;
- Keep dogs in a safe place, tied up or on a leash, and do not allow them to wander;
- If your pet is bitten by another animal, handle it with gloves, tie it up or isolate it until you receive instructions from the CFIA veterinarian;
- Notify the municipality of the presence of stray animals;
- Keep an eye on young children playing with animals.

Keep in mind that rabies is a contagious and fatal disease caused by a virus that attacks the central nervous system of mammals, including that of humans. It is generally spread through saliva from a bite by an infected animal, but it can also be transmitted through scratches as well as contact between the saliva or brain matter of an infected animal and a fresh wound (less than 24 hours old) or a mucous membrane (eyes, nose, mouth).

In case of a bite, wash the wound with soap and water for 15 minutes and immediately contact your CLSC. There is a vaccine for preventing rabies in case of a bite or exposure to the saliva

from an infected animal. However, to be effective, the vaccine must be administered rapidly after contact.

The owner of a domestic animal that has been bitten or wounded by a wild animal or who suspects his or her animal of having rabies or having been exposed to the virus is invited to contact the CFIA immediately. A representative of the agency may be reached weekdays at 450 420-3774 and weekends at 1 866 806-4115.

Anyone who would like to know more about rabies and the rabies virus, the symptoms or the precautions to take may consult the following Web site: [www.http://rage.gouv.qc.ca/index.php?accueil_en](http://rage.gouv.qc.ca/index.php?accueil_en).

*The NRBHSS is a public agency created in 1978 under the **James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement**. It is responsible for nearly the entire Québec territory located north of the 55th parallel in terms of the provision of health and social services for the inhabitants of the 14 communities.*

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This communiqué is also posted on our Web site at www.rrsss17.gouv.qc.ca.