



NEWS



City of Los Angeles □ Department of Animal Services
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DISTEMPER OUTBREAK IN SOUTH LOS ANGELES

L.A. Animal Services and L.A. County's Veterinary Public Health Office have declared a distemper outbreak in South Los Angeles with both agencies recommending distemper vaccinations for all dogs.

Canine distemper is a highly contagious, systemic, worldwide, viral disease of domestic dogs and susceptible wildlife. It is caused by a virus closely related to the measles virus and is transmitted through the air (airborne) or through droplet exposure from the nasal cavity, pharynx and lungs. It cannot be transmitted from animals to humans.

Over the years, distemper has caused the death or permanent disability of more young dogs than any other disease. The last distemper outbreak in Los Angeles was in 2002.

“Distemper can be very dramatic in its presentation causing respiratory, gastrointestinal and neurological symptoms,” says L.A. Animal Services Chief Veterinarian, Dr. Casandria Smith. “The course of the disease can be days to weeks characterized by fever, nasal and ocular discharge, depression, anorexia, convulsions, seizures and death. It is physically devastating to the animal and emotionally devastating to animal guardians.”

Concern began when shelter Veterinarians began to notice increasing numbers of suspected distemper cases from the community entering the South Los Angeles Shelter. The cases were reported to L.A. County's Veterinary Public Health Office which performed laboratory tests confirming distemper. The Cities of Carson and Lancaster have reported similar problems, notably in raccoons entering their shelters.

Other animals susceptible to distemper include coyotes, foxes, wolves, ferrets, skunks, raccoons, mink, leopards, lions and tigers.

L.A. Animal Services reminds pet owners to check with their private veterinarians on a regular basis for advice on preventive medicine as well as for guidance on infectious diseases.

For more information on distemper or low cost vaccination clinics, residents can call L.A. Animal Services at **1-888-4LA-PET1** or **1-888-452-7381** (TTY Hearing Impaired: **877-875-8205**) or visit the department's website: www.LAAnimalServices.com

L.A. Animal Services is one of the largest organizations in the nation that rescues, houses and cares for some 70,000 lost and abandoned animals annually, enforces animal-related laws and acts to prevent cruelty to animals.