

Advisory: Pets rescued from Texas need medical screening

Los Angeles, CA – The Los Angeles County Department of Animal Care and Control, Southern California Veterinary Medical Association (SCVMA), Long Beach Animal Care Services (LBACS), and Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Los Angeles (spcaLA), and urge residents who recently adopted or rescued a dog or cat from Texas following Hurricane Harvey to have the animal seen by a veterinarian, screened for infectious diseases, and treated if necessary.

“Pet disease risk varies state to state. Some diseases, such as heartworm and leptospirosis, are much more common in Texas than Southern California. Canine influenza was also on the increase in the area prior to the hurricane,” said Executive Director of SCVMA, Dr. Peter Weinstein, DVM, MBA. “So, if you are adopting or fostering a dog that has been transported, ask the rescue about their screening protocols and request any medical records they may have. If you have a pet, keep them separate until you receive the ‘all clear’ from your veterinarian.”

Recommendations for owners/guardians of pets rescued from Texas:

- Take your pet to a veterinarian to be screened, and treated if necessary, for heartworm and possibly other infectious diseases.
- Obtain medications to remove any fleas, ticks or internal parasites.
- Ensure the new pet is up-to-date on its immunizations.
- Contact your local animal control agency to license your pet.
- Dogs from stressful environments may be incubating infections even if they are not showing clinical signs. As a result, keep your newly rescued pet at home for 30 days to minimize stress and for monitoring and protection from possible infections.

“We are grateful to all who wish to help the animal victims of Hurricane Harvey,” said spcaLA President, Madeline Bernstein. “It is important to work with experienced, legitimate animal welfare organizations and take health precautions to ensure your goodwill does not unwittingly endanger your pets, shelter animals, or the health of people in the Southern California community.”

Southern California typically has very low instances of heartworm disease. To prevent this parasite from spreading among local pet populations, please use caution when adopting or interacting with dogs transported from Texas, or other areas where the disease is prevalent. Heartworm disease is potentially fatal and spread by mosquitos. Heartworms infect the heart, lungs and other internal organs. If left untreated, it can be fatal. Even with treatment, the effects of heartworm can impact quality of life due to the resultant organ damage.

Canine Influenza Virus (CIV), or ‘dog flu’, is a relatively new, highly contagious viral infection affecting dogs. Affected dogs may develop coughing, nasal discharge, fever, lethargy, and loss of appetite. With proper care, most dogs will recover. However, in some cases, CIV can progress to a more severe or even life-threatening condition, such as pneumonia. CIV is spread through direct contact with respiratory secretions from infected dogs (coughing, barking, and sneezing) and by contact with contaminated objects (toys, water bowls, food dishes, leashes). Dogs may continue to spread CIV for weeks, even after symptoms are no longer present.

Los Angeles County Department of Animal Care and Control

Media Contact: Don Barré, Public Information Officer

Office: (562) 728-4644, Cell (562) 355-0490, PIO@animalcare.lacounty.gov

Long Beach Animal Care Services

Media Contact: Ted Stevens

(562) 570-3051, Ted.Stevens@longbeach.gov

Southern California Veterinary Medical Association

Media Contact: Peter Weinstein, DVM, MBA

(714) 821-7493, pweinstein@scvma.org

spcaLA

Media Contact: Ana Bustilloz

(323) 730-5300 x252, abustilloz@spcaLA.com