



Mass Rabies Exposure Event Linked to Horse Farm in Montpelier, VA, 2022

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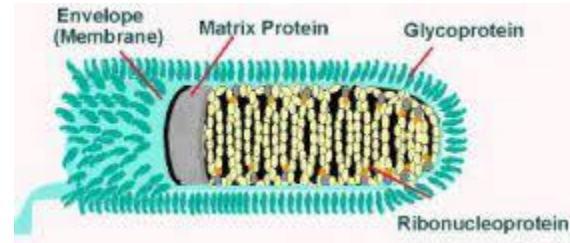
Virginia Department of Health

Background

- A local veterinarian contacted CHD on April 6th, 2022 to report they were submitting a deceased pygmy goat for rabies testing.
- The vet wanted to notify the LHD in advance because there was potential for a large number of exposures.
- On April 7th CHD received the goat head for testing and the following day we were notified of a positive test result.
- The investigation begins!



Rabies

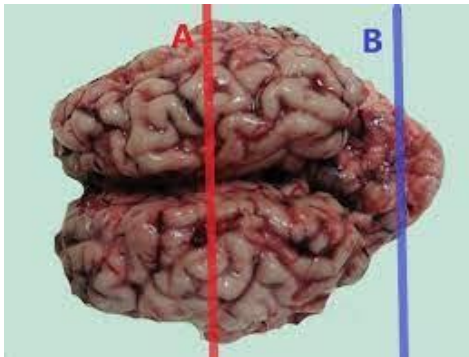


- Rabies is a preventable viral illness most often transmitted through the bite of a rabid animal.
- Rabies is caused by a negative stranded RNA virus that belongs to the Rhabdoviridae family.
- Rabies symptoms consist of weakness, fever and headache progressing to neurological dysfunction, confusion, anxiety, hydrophobia and ultimately death.
- All mammals can contract rabies but in the US, most cases of rabies occur in bats, raccoons, skunks and foxes.



The Role of the LHD

- LHD's play a critical role in preventing human cases of rabies!
- Specimens from animals suspected to have rabies are collected by the LHD and tested at the state lab
- Rabies post exposure prophylaxis is recommended for individuals who have been exposed to rabies
- The last human case of rabies in Virginia was in 2017



Rabies PEP

- Rabies PEP consists of one dose of HRIG (human rabies immunoglobulin) and 4 doses of rabies vaccine administered on day 0, 3, 7 and 14.
- Rabies incubation in humans varies considerably, but is typically 21-90 days.
- PEP should be administered as soon as possible after an exposure to rabies. Time is of the essence!



RABIES POSTEXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS (PEP)

WORLD RABIES DAY SEPTEMBER 28

It consists of a dose of human rabies immune globulin (HRIG) and rabies vaccine.
Given:

- On the day of the rabies exposure.
- Again, on days 3, 7, and 14 of exposure.

People previously vaccinated or are receiving Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis for rabies should receive only vaccine.

INTEGRATION PREVENTION AND CONTROL FOR WELLNESS
CSR PROTECTOR
#VaccinateToEliminate

The infographic features a cartoon illustration of a doctor and a woman with a child. The doctor is pointing to a whiteboard that says 'PEP'. On the whiteboard, there are icons of a syringe, a vial, and a dog. The background is blue with a paw print icon in the top right corner.

The Farm

- A large working horse farm located in Montpelier, VA.
- During the week there was a horse riding sleepaway camp with approximately 20 children staying on the farm.
- Additional children & families came daily for riding lessons.
- Tight knit rural community where everyone knows each other and many people own farm animals.
- Goats were kept in a closed pen away from the horses.



The Goats

- The farm raised goats for use in rodeos.
- The goats were kept away from the children and horses in order to keep them feral.
- On March 31st a baby pygmy goat was noted to be limping with a large jagged gash on its buttocks.
- The goat stopped eating, began vomiting and eventually displayed neurological symptoms.
- Many people participated in its care over the course of the week.



Caring for the Goat

- The goat was adorable so everyone wanted to help nurse it back to health!
- The care included administering oral medications, wound care, and OG tube feedings.
- Gloves were not used and there was no handwashing.
- Many exposed persons reported cuts to their hands due to their work/activities on the farm.



The Investigation

- Immediately contacted the farm owner who provided a list of 73 individuals from 25 separate families who may have been in contact with the goat.
- Every family was interviewed and 17 people were determined to be exposed.
- In total, 20 individuals received PEP.
- PEP was completed for everyone by April 27th.



The Exposures

- The majority of the exposures occurred while trying to administer medications or OG tube feeds through bare hand contact with the goat's saliva or emesis.
- One memorable exposure reported carrying the goat to the house face to face and “giving it a few kisses.”



Health Department Recommendations

- Immediate initiation of PEP for all human exposures.
- Thorough examination of all animals on the farm.
- Quarantine of the mother goat for 6 months.
- Quarantine of all goats in the pen for 1 month.
- Administration of rabies vaccination for any animals not UTD.



Lessons Learned

- Rabies education is critical, almost all of the exposures would have been prevented if someone had considered rabies
- Number of people involved in caring for sick animals should be limited.
- Proper precautions (i.e. gloves, handwashing) should be taken when caring for sick animals.
- Veterinarians and LHDs play a critical role in preventing human cases of rabies.

Acknowledgments

- Chickahominy Health District Director
 - Thomas Franck, MD, MPH
- Public Health Veterinarian
 - Julia Murphy, DVM, MS
- Central Region Epidemiologist
 - Angela Myrick-West, MPH

“Heaven gained a sweet beautiful baby goat last night” - Owner

