

## Animal Health Advisory: Animal Health Workers Traveling to Regions Near Ukraine

4.7.2022

### Key Points

- Veterinarians and staff may be traveling to regions surrounding Ukraine to assist with evacuation and care of animals.
- Ukraine is considered a [high-risk country for rabies](#). Treatment for rabies exposure may not be available in affected areas.
- The ongoing situation will likely result in an increased risk of exposure to human infectious diseases including polio, measles, tuberculosis, diarrheal diseases, vector-borne diseases, and other zoonotic diseases, as well as COVID-19.
- Please review the below information in detail especially if you are planning to travel to assist these animals.

Dear Colleagues,

We are aware that local veterinary staff are traveling to neighboring regions of Ukraine to assist with the evacuation and veterinary care of animals from that country.

Animal health workers in LA County that travel internationally to assist with animal evacuation and veterinary care efforts should learn about disease risks and travel requirements, and take necessary measures in advance before considering travel. It is strongly recommended to connect with an organized group that has been approved by the European Union to provide veterinary care in the region, before deciding to travel to provide assistance.

The war in Ukraine has created severe disruptions in hygiene, sanitation, water supply, food, disease control programs, medical supply chains, and access to accurate up-to-date disease information in the country and potentially in surrounding areas. There is an elevated risk of multiple human infectious diseases in Ukraine and surrounding areas involved in the response, including polio, measles, tuberculosis, COVID-19, and diarrheal diseases.[1, 2]

There is also an increased risk for exposure to zoonotic and vector-borne diseases, and for spread of animal diseases. As spring arrives in the area, vectors such as mosquitoes and ticks will become more active, increasing the risk of exposure to West Nile Virus, *Dirofilaria repens*, Tickborne Encephalitis Virus, and potentially Crimean-Congo Hemorrhagic Fever.[1,3,4] African Swine Fever virus is present in feral hogs in Eastern Europe, and may be transported to new places via animal movement and on fomites such as animal bedding.[5]

Ukraine is considered a high-risk country for rabies, the highest in Europe.[6] Rabies variants from foxes and bats are enzootic there, resulting in an elevated incidence of rabies in domestic animals, including dogs and cats.[7]

The requirements for people traveling to and from the area may shift over time. The US State Department issues [Travel Advisories and Warnings](#) and lists requirements for travel.

This VPH Animal Health Update provides guidance on rabies prevention, human disease risk, and regulatory issues related to travel to the area.

### Rabies Risk

- Ukraine is a [high-risk country](#) for rabies. [6,7,8]
- Human rabies immune globulin (HRIG) and rabies vaccines may not be available in affected areas. Be prepared and have a plan on how to receive treatment if necessary.
- **Get vaccinated for rabies in advance.** If you will be handling animals originating from Ukraine or work with animals in general, you should receive pre-exposure vaccinations for rabies prior to working with animals.
  - Pre-exposure vaccination for rabies consists of three, 1ml rabies vaccines injected intramuscularly (IM) on days 0, 7, 21, or 28.
  - Pre-immunized individuals *still need urgent treatment* in the event of potential rabies exposure, however being pre-immunized eliminates the need for HRIG, and reduces the number of vaccinations needed for treatment, in the event of an exposure.
  - If you have previously received pre-exposure vaccinations for rabies, depending on your rabies risk, [you should have your serum titers checked at recommended intervals](#) and have booster vaccine doses administered as needed. Most veterinarians are part of the “frequent risk” group and rabies titers should be checked every 2 years.
  - For more specifics, see [CDC recommendations on rabies pre-exposure vaccination](#).
- **Get treated quickly if you are exposed to rabies.** If you have a rabies exposure, rabies post-exposure prophylaxis (rabies PEP) is necessary and considered a medical urgency, *even if you are pre-immunized*.
  - Clean the bite wound with soap and water, immediately and thoroughly, and seek medical consultation from a provider familiar with rabies in the area right away.
  - If the bite was from a dog, cat, or ferret, the animal should be confined and observed for clinical signs of rabies for 10 days after the bite. [9]
  - Rabies PEP for pre-immunized individuals:
    - 2 rabies vaccinations given 3 days apart (day 0 and day 3, with day 0 as the first day of treatment).
    - Should *not* receive HRIG.
  - Rabies PEP for individuals who are not pre-immunized:

- One dose of HRIG given IM during first week of treatment. Dose is based on body weight and is typically several ml.
- 4 or 5 rabies vaccinations, given IM over 2-4 weeks. These vaccines are given on days 0, 3, 7, 14, and occasionally on day 28 counting from the first day of treatment. The 5<sup>th</sup> vaccine is typically given to those who are immunocompromised.
- For more specifics, see [CDC recommendations on rabies PEP](#).
- Be aware that other countries may utilize different rabies post-exposure treatment protocols that vary depending on exposure severity. [10]

## COVID-19

- Make sure you are up to date with your COVID-19 vaccinations before you travel internationally or domestically.
- Prior to travel, [understand the COVID-19 risk in your destination country and any COVID-19 restrictions](#).
- [Understand COVID-19 regulations for returning to the United States](#).

## Other Infectious Diseases

- Many infectious diseases that are rare in the United States are present in Ukraine and potentially in surrounding areas. The risk of exposure to measles, polio, hepatitis A, and tuberculosis are of special concern.
  - Review the [CDC travel website](#) regarding recommended vaccinations, medications, and travel advisories in your destination country.
  - Make sure you are up-to-date on all recommended vaccines before you travel. Consult a Travel Physician or Travel Clinic.

## Importing Animals Into the United States

- Ukraine is classified as a High-Risk Country for Dog Rabies. Therefore the [CDC Temporary Suspension of Dogs Entering the United States From Countries Classified as High Risk for Dog Rabies](#) is still in effect.
- CDC is working to expedite dog import permit requests from Ukrainian citizens wishing to import their personally owned pet dogs. Dogs are still required to meet all of CDC's entry requirements. **Individuals who travel to Ukraine or surrounding countries wishing to adopt dogs that originated in Ukraine to bring back to the United States will not be issued an import permit.**
- Animal health workers should understand [CDC's requirements and restrictions on importing pets into the USA](#).

## Legality of Practicing Veterinary Medicine in Another Country

- Veterinarians and other licensed staff who travel to countries outside of their licensing jurisdiction must ensure that it is legal to practice veterinary medicine in the destination country before doing so.

## References

1. World Health Organization. Emergency in Ukraine- Situation Report. <https://www.who.int/emergencies/situations-reports/ukraine-emergency>
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Polio in Asia and Eastern Europe. <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/alert/polio-asia>
3. Crimean-Congo Hemorrhagic Fever. <https://www.cdc.gov/vhf/crimean-congo/index.html>
4. Capelli, G. et al. Recent advances on *Dirofilaria repens* in dogs and humans in Europe. Parasites Vectors 11, 663 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13071-018-3205-x>.
5. World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE). African Swine Fever – includes link to Situation Reports. <https://www.oie.int/en/disease/african-swine-fever/>
6. World Health Organization. Rabies. <https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/themes/topics/rabies>
7. Polupan I, et al. An Analysis of Rabies Incidence and Its Geographic Spread in the Buffer Area Among Orally Vaccinated Wildlife in Ukraine From 2012 to 2016. *Front Vet Sci* 2019; 10 September 2019. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fvets.2019.00290>
8. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). High Risk Countries for Dog Rabies. <https://www.cdc.gov/importation/bringing-an-animal-into-the-united-states/high-risk.html>
9. National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians. Compendium of Animal Rabies Prevention and Control, 2016. <http://www.nasphv.org/Documents/NASPHVRabiesCompendium.pdf>
10. World Health Organization. Rabies Post-exposure Prophylaxis Guidelines, 2014. [https://www.who.int/rabies/PEP\\_Prophylaxis\\_guideline\\_15\\_12\\_2014.pdf](https://www.who.int/rabies/PEP_Prophylaxis_guideline_15_12_2014.pdf)

Sincerely,

Karen Ehnert, DVM, MPVM, DACVPM

Director

Veterinary Public Health

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health

313 N. Figueroa St, Room 1127

Los Angeles, CA 90012

(213) 288-7060

(213) 481-2375 Fax

[kehner@ph.lacounty.gov](mailto:kehner@ph.lacounty.gov)

<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/vet/>

Please email [vet@ph.lacounty.gov](mailto:vet@ph.lacounty.gov) if you wish to unsubscribe or need other AHAN-related assistance. To sign up for future Animal Health Alerts or to view previously released AHANs, please visit <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/vet/AHAN.htm>.

---