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Monkeypox: Questions and Answers **For Pet Stores and Animal Owners**

What is monkeypox disease?

This disease is caused by Monkeypox virus and affects people and animals. It is related to variola (smallpox), vaccinia (used in smallpox vaccine), and cowpox viruses.

It is a rare disease that is usually found in the rainforest of central and west Africa. In early June 2003, monkeypox was reported among several residents of Wisconsin, Illinois, and Indiana who became ill after having contact with sick prairie dogs.

What types of animals are affected and what are the signs of monkeypox?

Ground squirrels in Africa may be the natural reservoir for the disease. The infection has also been seen in monkeys, rats, mice, and rabbits, but all mammals should be considered susceptible at this time.

Illness in animals may include fever, cough, redness and swelling of the eyes, and a raised rash. Some animals have died while others recovered, but there is no treatment. Illness in people may include fever, headache, muscle aches, swollen lymph nodes, exhaustion and a raised rash. For detailed signs of illness in people, please check the CDC web site (below) or contact your doctor or local public health department.

How is monkeypox spread?

Animals and people can be infected through a bite or direct contact with the infected animal's blood, body fluids, or lesions.

What should you do if you think your animal may have monkeypox?

Do not release it into the wild. If you have acquired a prairie dog since April 15th and this animal is showing the above symptoms, isolate it from contact with other animals. Call ahead before taking your pet to the veterinarian. Consider wearing a mask and gloves when handling the animal. Pack up bedding material in a plastic bag and take to veterinarian for appropriate disposal. In your home or pet store, clean contaminated surfaces with a standard cleaner used in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.

What are my responsibilities as a pet store operator?

All movement, sale, distribution of prairie dogs and certain other exotic species has been banned as a result of a joint order by the Food and Drug Administration and Centers of Disease Control and Prevention on June 12th 2003. This order includes Tree squirrels, Rope squirrels, Dormices, Gambian Giant Pouched Rats, Brush-tailed porcupines, and Striped mice. While these restrictions only apply to the listed species, NC Administrative Rule (02 NCAC 52B 0212) requires that all mammals have a valid health certificate before arrival to the state.

How do you transport a sick animal?

If you own a prairie dog or another one of the restricted species, only transport to a veterinary facility is allowed at this time (see above). Transport of the ill animal should be done by one individual. The animal should be in a closed container such as a cardboard box. Following transport, the area of the vehicle where the animal was confined should be cleaned with standard cleaner/disinfectant used in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.

Where can you get further information?

- Contact your veterinarian with questions on monkeypox as it relates to your animals.
- NCDA&CS Emergency Programs Division can be contacted at (919) 807 4300.
- The Centers of Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) is rapidly updating their information on monkeypox which can be found here: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/monkeypox/index.htm>
- Contact your local or state health department and doctor for human related monkeypox information.

Reference: Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) monkeypox fact sheets.